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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK SHOULD BE READ as a companion piece to *Why not Trust the Tories?* by "Celticus" (Aneurin Bevan, M.P.). His book showed what happened after the last war in home affairs, with particular attention to the gap between Conservative promises and what Conservative governments or Coalition governments with a big Conservative majority actually did between the wars.

This book is intended to do the same job for the Conservative record and Conservative promises in the field of foreign affairs.

The facts that will be set forth are so startling and unfold such a tale of deceit and cruelty as to be hard to believe. That is why great care has been taken to supply the proof for every statement of fact or at least to indicate the source, so that the reader can look up the proof for himself.

The First World War turned out to be the first totalitarian war. That is, in order to fight it we had to regiment the whole nation and mobilise our industries, resources and man-power, with little distinction between the fighters at the front and the workers in the factories.

Labour and the War

This made it necessary to enlist the active co-operation of organised Labour, which had to supply most of the man-power for the armed forces and workers for the war industries. That is why the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, told the National Executive of the Labour Party, when urging them to be represented in the War Cabinet, that:

"It is obvious that no Government can be carried on in this country whether during peace or war without, I won't say the support of Labour, but the co-operation of Labour. Upon its determination to help in winning this war everything depends."

When asked whether in that case Labour would have anything to say about the making of the peace settlement, the Prime Minister replied that "it seemed inconceivable that any Minister should make terms of peace without consulting representatives of Labour."

In point of fact, of course, Labour was not consulted, and the peace settlement was made so badly that it failed to prevent another world war within twenty years.

That was partly because during the war there was an enormous increase in the size and influence of great economic and financial rings, combines, cartels and monopolies of all kinds. The Federation of British Industries was founded during the First World War, and grew from a couple of scores of firms to a nation-wide organisation containing nearly two thousand firms and dominated by a handful of giant, semi-monopolist enterprises. After the 1918 Khaki Election Mr. Lloyd George was returned to power as the head of a Coalition, mostly of Conservatives with a "National-Liberal" following, and consisting, in J. M. Keynes' famous phrase, of "hard-faced men who looked as though they had done well out of the war."

It was in response to the business and banking world's conception of national interests that this country concluded a series of secret treaties with our Allies and pledged themselves to war aims that were in flat contradiction to those for which Labour stood and to their own public professions.

Labour v. Tories on Economic Controls

The big clash between Labour views and those of the Government inspired by big business came over the question of the abolition or preservation of wartime economic controls. The peace programme of the Labour Party and T.U.C., which was adopted by the whole inter-Allied Labour Socialist and Trade Union Movement, demanded that in order to avert the danger of unemployment and famine after the war the extensive controls over imports and exports, manufacture and distribution, raw materials and food that had been established by the Allies in the course of the war, and operated through the various inter-Allied transport, raw-materials, food, etc., boards, should be enlarged at the Peace Conference by the inclusion of both ex-neutrals and ex-enemies, put under the future League of Nations and used for the purpose of reconstruction after the war.

This idea became so popular and was pressed so hard by the Labour Movement that it was taken up by the Government and put into the Foreign Office Memorandum on the whole subject of organising peace, which said that it was "the inevitable corollary of the whole idea of a League of Nations." The Memorandum further pointed out that—

"the concentration of commercial and industrial power brought about by the war and the general trend towards the development of international syndicates exercising large political influence may make it necessary for the League of

Nations to undertake very considerable obligations in order to counteract the private power of such corporations. It is too early to make suggestions under this head, but this is probably the side of the League's work which will excite the greatest public interest and on which its success or failure in the public mind will chiefly depend in the first years of its existence."

But international controls could not be maintained unless they were based on the continuation of the national wartime economic controls that had been established in each country. The business and banking world of the United States, Great Britain and France started a raging, tearing propaganda campaign in the sacred name of freedom at the end of the last war for getting rid of war-time controls immediately. They succeeded.

Result of Abolishing Economic Controls

The results of their success have been authoritatively analysed by the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations Secretariat in a monograph published in 1943 and entitled *Europe's Overseas Needs, 1919-20, and how They were Met*. This publication shows with deadly clarity that the throwing off of wartime controls led directly to prices shooting sky high, the cost of living soaring, many countries being unable to buy the raw materials they needed to restart their industries and so suffering severely from unemployment. This again resulted in measures of self-help such as pushing up tariffs, debasing currencies and finally to inflation—that is, to currencies losing all value and becoming so much waste paper.

Finally, things got so bad that attempts were made by international action to put countries on their feet again. But "action was only taken when inflation and the threat of social upheaval rendered it an unavoidable political necessity." Action after currencies had collapsed "inevitably assumed the form rather of curing one festering spot after another than of attempting to restore health and vitality to the whole economic body of the Continent." The schemes applied were too superficial, confusing financial reform with economic reconstruction.

"But their real weakness was due to the fact that they came too late and only after irreparable harm had been done by the failure to formulate any general plan for reviving European industry and furnishing promptly the raw materials and other goods necessary for that revival. . . . Commercial policy was

driven from the outset down the wrong road and never found another."

Sir Arthur Salter, who as director of the Economic and Financial Section of the League Secretariat was at the very centre of the post-war international reconstruction effort, sums up the lesson to be drawn from it as follows:

"The success of the first ten years' effort of recovery was as striking as its later collapse. It realised its objective, which was to rebuild the pre-war system. Failure came because that system was in several vital respects inappropriate to the new conditions, and because it was too weak to resist and control the new and greater forces that had developed within our economic and political system. This I believe to be the essential significance of the post-war period.

"The removal of State control and the establishment of conditions favourable to private enterprise,"

says Sir Arthur, was the starting-point of the post-war international reconstruction effort, which was directed, after satisfying the first needs of urgent relief, "to the re-establishment of the pre-war system with the one notable addition of the League of Nations," that was to "supplement but would not necessarily change fundamentally national sovereignty and the traditional social and economic system."

"The tale of collapse," concludes Sir Arthur, "extending over the whole range of man's collective constructive efforts of the first decade after the World War, cannot now be retold. But it is necessary to emphasise the central feature to be observed in every sphere of disintegration. It was the old system that had been rebuilt; and this system proved in some respects unsuitable to the new conditions and not strong enough to control the new forces."

Conclusion

Those responsible for the foreign policy of this country "stumbled and staggered," in Lloyd George's phrase, rather than deliberately went into the war in 1914, because they identified the national interest with defending the class interest at home and abroad of the business and banking community. They were apprehensive from the start as to what was going to happen to the social order they identified with civilisation as a result of the war. They got more nervous and frightened than

ever when they found that the war had become not a matter for professional armies and navies, but one requiring a whole-hearted, all-inclusive national effort, and reliance in particular on the goodwill and co-operation of the organised workers.

They were just as lavish to the workers in their promises as regarded foreign affairs as they were in respect to home affairs. They said they would be consulted about the peace settlement. Mr. Lloyd George assured the Trade Union leaders that the Government's peace terms were the same as Labour's, and concealed from them the existence of the secret treaties. He said the arms industry would be nationalised.

The Government's fear rose to the pitch of terror when the Russian Revolution broke out. From that date to this the main preoccupation of successive Conservative governments and statesmen has been to preserve the social order and the Empire against the insurgent classes and races rendered militant by the First World War, the Russian Revolution, the great slump and the present war. We are in this war to-day because of their die-hard defence of capitalism ever since the last war.

This is the background against which we must study the record and results of the Conservative foreign policy that lost the peace. For if we keep this background in mind we shall understand that it is wrong to accuse the Conservative Party and its leaders of lacking in patriotism or sincerity, and merely foolish to try to explain their policy in terms of inefficiency, mistakes and muddle.

Their failure is on a scale and of a nature that goes far beyond anything that can be explained in terms of the shortcomings of individuals, however distinguished. What we are witnessing is no less a spectacle than the breakdown of a social order, registered in the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of a ruling class, that is, of those who conceive it their public and patriotic duty to defend things as they are against the urgent necessity for fundamental change.

In the following chapters will be sketched first the fight against the danger of social revolution that dominated the period immediately before, during and after the Peace Conference; the years when it looked as though capitalism were being successfully re-consolidated—roughly from the first post-war slump to the great slump; the years of co-operating with counter-revolution to bolster up the social order, tottering again after the shock of the great slump, that ended in the Second World War; and, finally, the situation to-day and to-morrow, when the Tories are trying to make history repeat itself.

"The choice before us is whether we shall make a last effort at Geneva for peace and security, or whether by a cowardly surrender we shall break all the promises we have made and hold ourselves up to the shame of our children and children's children."

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, *promising in the 1935 Election to stand up to Mussolini in defence of Abyssinia and of the Covenant.*

"History is but the shadow of their shame."

SHELLEY, *Sonnet on Political Greatness.*

"I suppose I was one of the 'yes-men' in the old days, and we yes-men are largely responsible for this war having come about. If we had not been so 'yes' it could have been avoided. A constructive act of statesmanship on the part of this country could have avoided this war."

SIR HENRY MORRIS-JONES, M.P. (*Nat. Lib.*),
January 28th, 1942.

"So far as this country is concerned the responsibility must rest with those who have the undisputed control of our political affairs. They neither prevented Germany from rearming, nor did they rearm ourselves in time. They quarrelled with Italy without saving Ethiopia. They exploited and discredited the vast institution of the League of Nations, and they neglected to make alliances and combinations which might have repaired previous errors, and thus they left us in the hour of trial without adequate defence or effective international security."

WINSTON CHURCHILL, *October 3rd, 1938.*

"The use of recriminating about the past is to enforce effective action at the present."

WINSTON CHURCHILL, *October 3rd, 1938.*

CHAPTER I

FIGHTING REVOLUTION

THE WHOLE OF THE PERIOD between the wars was dominated by the haunting fear of the forces of social revolution set in motion in Russia in 1917. This fear was particularly acute in the last year before and the first couple of years after the 1918 armistice. At the Peace Conference that far-seeing Tory Lord Esher wrote in his diary: "The French Revolution, shorn of its barbarities, conquered Europe in the nineteenth century. The Russian Revolution, shorn of its barbarities, seems destined to conquer the world in the twentieth century."

Ray Stannard Baker, a member of the American delegation at Paris, wrote in his book, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*:

"The spectre of revolution haunted the Peace Conference like a nightmare. . . . At all times, at every turn of the negotiations there rose the spectre of chaos like a black cloud out of the East threatening to overwhelm and swallow up the world. There was no Russia knocking at the gates of Vienna. At Vienna apparently the revolution was securely behind them; at Paris it was always with them."

Mr. Lloyd George, in his famous memorandum to the Big Four entitled "Some Considerations for the Peace Conference before they finally Draft their Terms," also made the point that, whereas at the Vienna Peace Congress the Powers had the French Revolution safely behind them, the peace-makers at Paris were faced with the dread fact that the Russian Revolution was still in its infancy, and that—

"The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of Revolution. There is a deep sense, not only of discontent, but of anger and revolt amongst the workmen against pre-war conditions. The whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other. . . . There is a danger that we may throw the masses of the population throughout Europe into the arms of the extremists, whose only idea for regenerating mankind is to destroy utterly the whole existing fabric of society. These men have triumphed in Russia. . . .

"The greatest danger that I see in the present situation is

that Germany may throw in her lot with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains, her vast organising power at the disposal of the revolutionary fanatics whose dream is to conquer the world for Bolshevism by force of arms."

Mr. Lloyd George's argument was that the Allies must not make a peace so harsh as to throw Germany into the arms of the Spartacists [revolutionary Socialists], or create a situation in which they could find no responsible German government prepared to sign the peace treaty. If Germany rejected the peace settlement or turned revolutionary or relapsed into such chaos that there was no authority capable of carrying out a peace treaty, the Allies would be in a dangerous position. Public opinion would not allow them deliberately to starve Germany by a blockade.

"A large army of occupation for an indefinite period is out of the question. Germany would not mind it. A very large number of people in that country would welcome it, as it would be the only hope of preserving the existing order of things."

The objections to large-scale and long-drawn occupation would come from American and British opinion. France could not do the job alone.

The fear lest Germany too should go Socialist was indeed only one degree less acute than the terror felt by the Allies at the Russian Revolution. Thus in April, 1919, an American officer stationed in Berlin wired the American delegation at the Peace Conference that, if the German Socialist-Bourgeois Coalition Government were "overthrown by a general strike or Spartacist *coup de main* . . . the Entente would be faced with a Germany without any constituted government that could sign the peace treaty."

Temperley's semi-official *History of the Peace Conference*, writing of this period, says the Allies could not decide how to enforce fulfilment of the reparation clauses if Germany became a group of independent states and Communist republics, where the governments would indulge in fantastic experiments in the socialisation of industries.

"Military occupation might be worse than useless" because "the German troops had been contaminated with Bolshevik propaganda during the occupation of Russia. It might be equally dangerous for Entente troops to occupy revolutionary Germany."

Mr. Lloyd George, in the course of an impassioned plea to the Allied Supreme Council that food should be sent to Germany at once, observed that—

“British officers who had been in Germany said that Bolshevism was being created, and the determining factor was going to be food. As long as the people were starving they would listen to the arguments of the Spartacists, and the Allies by their action were simply encouraging elements of disruption and anarchy. It was like stirring up an influenza puddle next door. The condition of Russia was well known, and it might be possible to look on at the muddle which had there been created. But now, if Germany went, and perhaps Spain—who would be safe? As long as order was maintained in Germany a breakwater would exist between the countries of the Allies and the waters of revolution beyond. But once that breakwater was swept away he could not speak for France, and he trembled for his own country. . . . He begged the Council to reaffirm their decision to abandon the blockade in the most unequivocal terms, for, unless this people were fed by the Allies, if the people of Germany were allowed to run riot, a state of revolution among the working classes of all countries would ensue with which it would be impossible to cope.”

Half Intervention in Germany and Hungary

The fear of revolution was again the chief motive in determining the Allies' policy on German disarmament. They tried to hit the happy mean between making Germany incapable of aggression and leaving her a military force capable of maintaining law and order. The latter function was defined, in a conversation between President Wilson, Marshal Foch and Mr. Lloyd George that took place on March 17th, 1919, as a military force sufficient to deal with any exterior danger “from the Bolsheviks and so forth which the Germans might have to meet on their eastern frontiers,” and to suppress “Spartacist insurrections.”

As a direct continuation of this policy, the Allies, while insisting on the disarmament of Germany, connived at the existence and activities, contrary to the terms of the Versailles Treaty, of the various armed semi-military organisations such as the Stahlhelm, the Black Reichswehr, Orgesch, Consul, and last but not least, Hitler and his so-called National Socialists. All these bodies were sworn enemies of the Weimar Republic, of democracy and of the Versailles Treaty, and preached a war

of revenge. But the German Government pleaded that they were its last line of defence against the Reds. Lord D'Abernon, our Ambassador in Berlin in those days, reported in his diary that on balance the Allies thought it was preferable to wink at the illegal existence and activities of these organisations, rather than to risk Germany succumbing to the Reds by being too strict about German disarmament.

In short, the Allies, by the ruthless use of their control of food supplies (which they threatened would be withheld from a revolutionary Germany) and of military power, preserved the social set-up in Germany, with the passive assistance of German Social-Democratic and T.U. leaders frightened of revolution. That is, they kept the Junker landlords, big business and the Prussian officer caste as well as the reactionary Civil Service and judges in their old commanding positions, and let loose the armed bands of gangsters, down-and-outers, adventurers and uprooted lower middle-class malcontents and fanatics who were the fertile seed of German Fascism. In all this the reader may discern the seed of the policy that budded at Locarno, flowered in appeasement, and bore bloody fruit in the Second World War.

In Hungary the Allies, by similar methods, succeeded in dislodging the Bela Kun Communist régime and installing the dictatorship and White Terror of Admiral Horthy, which kept Hungarian landowners in possession of their estates and ultimately landed Hungary on the side of Hitler in this war.

Full Intervention in Russia

Half-wars of intervention in the rest of Europe were accompanied by a full war of intervention in Russia. It was conducted for nearly three years on the plea, first, that it was part of the war against Germany; second, that the Allies went to Russia to bring food to the Russian people, rescue them from chaos and anarchy and help them to restore law and order; and throughout on the pretext that we were not taking sides in Russian internal politics, but were acting as the friends and liberators of the Russian people against extremists of the Right and Left, and helping them to determine their own future by democratic means through a freely elected Constituent Assembly.

The records now available show that these assurances were from the outset deliberate falsehoods, and were only uttered with intent to deceive and to enable the interventionists to get away with preparing and waging war on the side of the Whites against the Reds. The decisive piece of evidence is contained in

a memorandum, framed by Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, and adopted by the War Cabinet on December 21st, 1917—that is, six weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution. This memorandum was sent by the War Cabinet to the French Government, which accepted it as a statement of the policy to be pursued by the Allies towards Russia. The two main proposals of the memorandum, in its own words, were:

1. "We should represent to the Bolsheviks that we have no desire to take part in any way in the internal politics of Russia, and that any idea that we favour a counter-revolution is a profound mistake. Such a policy might be attractive to the autocratic Governments of Germany and Austria, but not to the Western democracies or America. . . ."
2. At the same time as they were to try to make the Reds believe these assurances, the Allies were, as regards the Whites, to supply—

"money to reorganise the Ukraine, to pay the Cossacks and the Caucasian forces, and to subsidise the Persians. . . . Besides finance, it is important to have agents and officers to advise and support the provincial governments and their armies. It is essential that this should be done as quietly as possible, so as to avoid the imputation—as far as we can—that we are preparing to make war on the Bolsheviks."

In the course of intervention, the Allies rejected the advice of their men on the spot that co-operation with the Bolsheviks and acceptance of Lenin's offer, made early in 1918, to fight on our side, was the best way to restore the Eastern Front against Germany. Moreover, as the War Cabinet minutes of January 22nd, 1918, show, this advice was rejected, not because the men on the spot were disbelieved, but because of a deliberate War Cabinet decision to pursue the class war against the Russian Revolution even if it jeopardised and retarded our victory against Germany. For, according to these minutes, Mr. Balfour said that—

"From the point of view of postponing a separate peace between Russia and Germany and stopping the Germans getting supplies out of Russia, it would appear that the Bolsheviks were more likely to effect such a policy than any other party in Russia. The Bolsheviks, however, appeared determined to spread what he described as 'passionate propaganda' in this country and also in Germany."

He added that, according to his information, the danger of revolution in Germany appeared to be really serious. This was ten months before the Armistice.

According to the War Cabinet minutes, Sir George Buchanan, our former Ambassador in Russia, who attended this meeting as an expert witness—

“thought it was clear that the Germans would like to see a rupture between us and the Bolsheviks, and would like our representative at Petrograd to be withdrawn in order to give them a clear field.”

Nevertheless, he said—

“he would sooner see a rupture than allow Bolshevik propaganda on a large scale in this country, as such propaganda was dangerous and attractive to those who had nothing to lose.”

The armistice conditions imposed on Germany provided for the “immediate evacuation of the invaded countries on the Western Front” and for the “immediate withdrawal of all German troops from the occupied areas of Turkey, Austria, Hungary and Rumania.” But they went on to state that the German troops in occupation of Russian territory “were only to withdraw as soon as the Allies shall think the moment suitable having regard to the internal situation of these territories.” As Temperley’s *History of the Peace Conference* observes: “In the case of the Baltic States the menace of the Bolshevik irruption was so pressing that the Armistice allowed the continuation of German occupation.” In the words of an American official mission sent to investigate the situation in the Baltic States at the time:

“The Germans were present in the Baltic provinces with the full consent of the Allies, and indeed by their implied command. The framers of the Armistice agreement recognised that the Red Tide could not be held by any bulwark which any of these native races could maintain. Estonia and Latvia were themselves permeated with the Bolshevistic poison.”

The Allies attempted to keep the German Army of Occupation in Eastern Poland for fear of Bolshevism. But the German soldiers themselves went Red and were disarmed and sent home by the Poles, who then themselves took up the (politically) White

Man's burden, i.e. began a war of intervention on their own account, with Allied help and encouragement, but with grandiose annexationist aims that they partly realised in the Treaty of Riga (i.e. they took the mainly White Russian and Ukrainian territories east of the Curzon Line which the Russians have since retaken).

On November 18th Marshal Foch, as the Allied Commander-in-Chief, sent a strongly worded telegram to the Supreme Eastern Command of the German General Staff, ordering the German troops to remain in the Ukraine until further notice, while Allied troops were being assembled to replace them. But the German Army of Occupation there too were going from pink to Red. And so towards the end of November the Supreme Eastern Command of the German General Staff telegraphed urgently to Marshal Foch, imploring him to hurry up and to send Allied warships and landing parties to the Black Sea ports without delay. This was done, and the Allied forces "took over" from the German Army of Occupation—but not without a mutiny in the French Black Sea fleet and among the French troops.

The Allies ordered the German garrison in Odessa to take over the policing of the city and to make themselves responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Finally, as the situation became more critical and it proved impossible to collect more than a handful of officers from the Russian population, the German garrison was incorporated into the Allied troops under the command of the French General d'Anselme.

The German armies with whom the Allied forces established these idyllic relations, while we were still technically at war with Germany, were commanded by *ancien régime* Imperial Prussian generals who were bitterly hostile to the new-born democracy and Republic of Germany. Von der Goltz's forces in the Baltic in particular included a large proportion of specially reactionary and fanatical volunteers, who made themselves hated for their cruelty and excesses against the local population. They were in fact the equivalent in those days of Hitler's Waffen S.S. in the present war.

If we had co-operated with instead of fighting the Bolsheviks the world war would have been shortened by at least a year, Germany would have gone Socialist, and we should have had a peace that would have lasted until this day. But it is more than doubtful whether the statesmen, political parties and economic vested interests that have run this country for the last quarter of a century could have survived in those circumstances. The Second World War is in a very real sense the price

paid for the preservation of the capitalist economic system and almost uninterrupted Tory rule after the First World War.

Mr. Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, was the life and soul of intervention, which cost the taxpayer a hundred million pounds. After over two years of bitter warfare, intervention was beaten in Russia by the valour of the Red Army. Even then, however, the British Government went on helping the Poles in their way of aggression on the Soviets. When the Poles were beaten, the Government made clear threats and preparations to involve this country directly in the war. It was then that Labour finally defeated intervention by getting ready for a General Strike, and holding the Government responsible for what the Labour Party bluntly stated would be the revolutionary consequences if the Government did not call off their war at once.

Passive Intervention

But when active intervention was abandoned under the stress of main force, it was replaced by passive intervention, in the shape of an economic boycott, non-recognition and diplomatic non-intercourse. This lasted for years.

At the Genoa Conference in 1922 the Soviet delegation announced that the Soviet Government, who were then applying the New Economic Policy (a retreat from the extremes of war communism that restored a large sector of economic life, for the time being, to the hands of private enterprise), was anxious to renew trade relations, wanted loans and recognition, and in return offered economic concessions, non-aggression treaties, and co-operation in the League of Nations. The British and French Governments responded by demanding virtually a restoration of capitalism in Russia, and on this being refused tightened up the policy of isolating and excluding Soviet Russia from the comity of nations. The result was the conclusion at Rapallo of the treaty of friendship and non-aggression between Soviet Russia and the other outcast—the Weimar Republic.

The first Labour Government restored diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. These were broken off again by the subsequent Tory Government, which also won a General Election on the absurd pretext that the Communist Party were giving orders to the Labour Party (the Zinoviev Letter scare). The second Labour Government renewed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. But Tory hostility and fear became even more intense after the great slump, and led to the appeasement of Fascist aggressors and to sabotage of Labour's demand for an alliance with the U.S.S.R., which if concluded in time could have averted the Second World War.

CONSOLIDATING CAPITALISM

The League and the British People

THE CRUCIAL FACT ABOUT the founding of the League of Nations was that it was a revolutionary innovation, a concession wrung from Western Liberalism by the fear of social revolution. The League was pressed on reluctant Foreign Offices and Conservative politicians by Liberal leaders whose main argument was that it was a necessary lightning rod to avert the wrath to come from below, the only constructive idea and institution to put up as an alternative to Bolshevism.

There was genuine belief in the League on its own merits in the minds of its leading advocates and their supporters. But the driving force that overcame obstacles and put it on the map was the fear of revolution and the feeling that some concession must be made to the workers. They had been stung by the agony of four years' world war into taking a lively interest in foreign affairs, and into a mood of radical doubt about the traditional methods and aims of British foreign policy.

The League was intended to substitute international government for the balance of power as the ultimate object of British foreign policy and as the only way of securing peace. Within the League, the rival alliances were to be pooled in a concert of Powers who would put their armed force, not each behind support of its own views of its rights, but all together in support of the principle that all disputes should be referred to some form of peaceful settlement, and that States should accept third-party judgment on their rights rather than resort to war in defence of their own claims. Effect was given to this principle by a system of conferences and committees which States must attend, and by a procedure of pacific settlement which they promised to observe. In addition, States were to co-operate in pursuit of common social, economic and humanitarian interests.

The whole of this system was forced upon Governments by the pressure of public opinion, and particularly, so far as this country was concerned, by progressive opinion, which had been converted by four years of world war from its previous attitude of vague, semi-pacifist isolationism and Little Englandism to a desire for British leadership in ending international anarchy and in democratising the conduct of international affairs. The League as an embryo system of world government was in a very

real sense the British people's foreign policy, and represented the democratic and popular view of our major national interest in international affairs. That is why the Left always stood for the development of so-called "collective security," and why the two brief Labour Governments, in 1924 and 1929-30, gave a lead at Geneva for making a reality of those parts of the Covenant that called for the peaceful settlement of all disputes; collective action to stop aggression, and reduction and limitation of armaments by international agreement.

The League and the Conservative Party

But at no time were the Foreign Office (as distinguished from the personal views of some of its best officials) and the seasoned power-politicians in charge of the old political parties converted to the view that it was really a major national interest to try to make a success of the League of Nations. The League never outgrew its amateur status in the eyes of the economic classes, political parties and departments of State that had traditionally regarded foreign and Imperial affairs and defence questions as more or less their monopoly, and a matter on which democracy could not with safety and decorum take too active an interest. To them the League was an idealistic and academic enterprise, and the treaty obligations of the Covenant were only binding if and when and in so far as it seemed expedient to invoke them on behalf of "real" national interests.

Whereas progressive opinion wished to convert the League into an effective system of world government, which was undoubtedly what it was intended to become by its founders, the Conservative Party in this country strove successfully to convert the League into an inoffensive body for co-operation on humanitarian and other minor matters and for discussions, mostly confidential, between statesmen. Instead of using the League to make the world safe for democracy, they weakened the League until it became safe for power politics and international anarchy, and so ultimately for Fascism, aggression, appeasement and world war.

This Conservative attitude prevailed during the period between the great war and the great slump, when domestic as well as international affairs were conducted on the unspoken assumption that the attempt, on which post-war reconstruction had been based, to restore the pre-war economic and social system had been successful, and that capitalism had picked up the threads where they were dropped in 1914 and would go on from strength to strength. It changed radically when the post-war reconstruction

effort crashed and the foundations of the social order cracked under the impact of the great slump.

Labour v. Conservative Policy

But Labour and Conservative policies clashed even during this period of relative calm and stability. We have seen how the big business demand, through the Tories, for the scrapping of wartime economic controls and the restoration of "free enterprise" had knocked the bottom out of Labour's proposal to put the League of Nations in charge of the international reconstruction effort, with the powers necessary to give adequate central guidance and assistance. We have seen, too, that the result was to make reconstruction a long-drawn, painful, lop-sided business, and to sow the seeds of the first post-war slump and the great slump.

The Geneva Protocol

On the side of security, too, there was a sharp clash. The first Labour Government, hand-in-hand with a Government of the Left in France, framed the Geneva Protocol. This was a bold and far-sighted attempt to give practical effect to those treaty obligations of the Covenant that called for the reduction and limitation of armaments by international agreement; the peaceful settlement of all disputes; and effective collective action against any aggression. The Protocol was a general treaty that was to bind all the members of the League to settle their disputes and to stand together against aggression more effectively than under the Covenant. It was to come into force only when a convention for the limitation and reduction of armaments was actually being applied.

If the Protocol had come into force, it would have stabilised armaments at their then (1924) low levels and kept Germany disarmed. It would have made the League such a powerful reality as to attract the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. into co-operation if not membership, to stimulate the beginnings of international social and economic co-operation, and to erect an impenetrable barrier to the Fascist aggressions that a few years later wrecked world peace.

Locarno

But it was not to be. The Tory Party rejected the Protocol, on grounds that were equally a rejection of the treaty obligations of the Covenant that they were sworn to uphold, and which revealed them to be impenitent anarchists and power-politicians.

For the Protocol they substituted the Locarno Agreements, a piecemeal arrangement that left all but west Europe open to aggression. The Locarno Treaties provided that if either France attacked Germany or Germany attacked France, this country was to come to the aid of the attacked party. France and Germany also agreed to settle all their disputes with each other by peaceful means.

The Balance of Power Motive

These treaties were good in so far as they meant a serious attempt to use the League. But they were bad in so far as they attempted to use the League for reviving in a new form the old policy of the balance of power, and for carrying further the counter-revolutionary policy of organising Europe against the U.S.S.R. and the spread of "Communism."

In the view of Sir Austen Chamberlain and the Foreign Office, the Locarno Treaties put Britain back in her old position of holding the scales in the balance of power, and left her free to throw her weight on whichever side best served her interests at the time. During the heyday of appeasement, indeed, this provision of Locarno was used by Sir John Simon (in the House, 2/5/35) in an attempt to blackmail the French out of their projected alliance with Russia, and to induce them to leave Hitler a free hand in East Europe.

The Anti-Soviet Motive

Locarno was also in a sense a direct continuation of the policy of using British military power and control of food supplies during and after the Peace Conference to fight "Spartacism" in Germany, and of tolerating the armed bands of reactionary and counter-revolutionary enemies of the Republic and of Versailles as a bulwark against the Left. If that was the seed, this aspect of Locarno was the bud of the policy that flowered eight years later in the appeasement of Hitler and was inspired by the same fundamental social motive, i.e. to preserve the social *status quo* in Germany as a bulwark against Communist Russia at any ultimate risk to the international *status quo* and world peace. Locarno endeavoured to appease bourgeois Germany and nascent German reaction, in order to wean them from the policy of the Rapallo Treaty and to win them over to the British Conservative policy of treating Soviet Russia as virtually an enemy.

These points are made amply clear in the following extract from the diary of Lord D'Abernon, explaining the attitude

toward international relations that determined Conservative foreign policy before, during and after Locarno:

"It was apparent to those who took a world view that Western civilisation was menaced by an external danger which, coming into being during the war, threatened a cataclysm equalled only by the fall of the Roman Empire. This danger arose from the sweeping success in 1917 of the revolution against the Czarist régime and the establishment in Russia of a fanatical Communist Government, animated by hatred of all political organisations which stood in the way of a world victory of the Soviet creed. . . . Public opinion both in France and Germany was so concentrated upon the Rhine frontier questions that it relegated the vastly more important problem of the defence of Europe against Asiatic communism to the category of the non-urgent. And yet there is little doubt that a blind persistence in the policy of maintaining the war grouping of the Allies against Germany would eventually have led to Germany being forced into close alliance with Russia. . . . An Asiatic revolt under German direction against established institutions and supported by German industry and science may be considered an unnatural combination. But were it to come into being, the danger to European civilisation would be dire in the extreme. . . . On broad grounds of European interest the case was strong [for the Locarno policy of peace in the West and a free hand for Germany in the East] for all nations who regarded Western civilisation as a precious heritage. It was even stronger when judged from the special standpoint of the British Empire. Apart from the general danger resulting from the spread of communism, the anti-English bias in Russia throughout the nineteenth century had to be borne in mind. The pressure of Bolshevik propaganda in combination with the traditional political hostility might create a force of huge potentiality. Resistance to communistic propaganda, the maintenance of peace in Europe, the avoidance of another Great War, the establishment of security for respective frontiers, the preservation of society on existing lines, were capital objects of British policy. But there was more than this. England's stupendous and vital interests in Asia were menaced by a danger graver than any which existed in the time of the old Imperialistic régime in Russia. Hostility to England or jealousy of the intrusion of British civilisation into Asia were indeed of old standing. For the last seventy years of the nineteenth century, rivalry between England and Russia had

been a dominant fact in history. But the Bolsheviks disposed of two weapons which Imperial Russia lacked—class-revolt propaganda, appealing to the proletariat of the world, and the quasi-religious fanaticism of Lenin, which infused a vigour and zeal unknown to the officials and emissaries of the Czar. In the presence of the menace of such forces no solution of the European problem could be tolerated by English statesmen which threatened the exclusion of Germany from the European combination and left her a prey to Russian wiles and Russian influence. . . . Communism had already shown its power over French troops at Odessa in 1919. . . . Such were some of the arguments which from the first made reflective men sceptical of any permanent benefit to Europe or to England from the policy of pure compulsion against Germany."

CHAPTER III

CO-OPERATING WITH COUNTER-REVOLUTION

THE GREAT SLUMP OF 1929-34 ended the mood of uneasy complacency that characterised the defenders of the social order during the period when capitalism seemed safely restored. For that tremendous event shattered this assumption, and made shoring up the shaken social foundations and protection against the forces of social revolution once more the overwhelming motive of all Conservative policy, home, Imperial and foreign alike. In pursuit of this major aim the Conservative Party felt compelled to abandon even the limited support it had given the League of Nations, and to return to the traditional, pre-last-war methods and purposes of British foreign policy. By doing so they threw away every chance of *preventing* this war, lost us most of our allies, ushered in a new arms race and finally landed us half-armed and almost alone in the present world war, against the Axis that had been formed, flourished, and become strong and aggressive largely thanks to appeasement.

General Effects of the Slump

The 1929-34 slump was the longest, most severe slump ever known, and was truly worldwide. It was so bad that it showed something had gone fundamentally wrong with the economic system. After a time it destroyed faith in the possibility of restoring that system in its pre-slump form. Everywhere the business and banking world in its struggle to re-start industry

and trade went in for processes of rationalisation and combination that led to a vast growth of large-scale private enterprise in the form of cartels, trade associations, combines, trusts, rings and monopolies of all kinds. In all countries, too, these huge economic and financial concerns exercised a growing influence on governments, newspapers and political parties, and did so to promote policies of economic nationalism and to stimulate the only large-scale form of public works that does not compete with private enterprise and where supply creates demand—namely, armaments. These economic and social processes were accompanied by a strengthening of the political influence of the Right, appealing to nationalism, hatred of foreigners, hostility to the organised working class, and ultimately to anti-democratic and authoritarian sentiments.

In some countries, where democracy was firmly established, reaction triumphed and distorted the workings of democracy by the formation of so-called “national” governments, formed of coalitions of capitalist parties and preaching the necessity to abolish party politics and to rule without an opposition. That was what happened in this country and later in France. The National Government in this country was the direct result of pressure by the Bank of England and the F.B.I., that wanted to hang on to the gold standard, balance the budget, and slash expenditure on social services. All these economic policies are now officially recognised to be disastrously wrong in a depression.¹

In other countries reaction went all the way to counter-revolution, destroyed democracy and set up dictatorships resting on one party so constituted as to be in fact the instrument of the will of one man. That was what happened in Germany (and in Italy as early as the first post-war slump).

The point to note is that the political developments were in every case the result of the operation of underlying economic and social forces, and reflected more or less faithfully the needs and “ideology” of big business. The way the process worked has been sketched in some detail in *Business as a System of Power*, by Professor R. A. Brady. His analysis draws attention to the essential similarity of the process in the capitalist democracies and the fascist countries, the difference being one of degree rather than of principle so far as the ambitions and programmes

¹ The Labour Government was of course accused of being responsible for the slump, although the latter was worldwide and had started in the U.S.A. Later, on October 15th, 1931, Mr. Neville Chamberlain had the grace to say that “I make this admission at once, that the financial troubles have not come upon us through anything that was done in this country or by the Labour Government.”

of big business are concerned and the ways in which it organises to exert pressure on the State. The details regarding the evolution toward a "corporate" authoritarian State are different, but the general trend is the same. It still continues, and has been speeded up during this war.

National Government and Fascism

Some of the leaders at least of the capitalist coalitions in the democracies were conscious of the fundamental kinship of purpose and of the interdependence between the governments they were leading and the Fascist régimes. Thus, at National Labour Party luncheons, in the first couple of years of the post-slump "National" Government in this country, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin and Sir John Simon, representing the three groups who had united to form the Government, made speeches drawing attention to the fact that they represented in a British form the same principle of national unity to save the country (that is, the existing social order threatened by the slump) that Hitler and Mussolini stood for in Germany and Italy. This statement was perfectly true, and is the key to the National Government's suicidal foreign policy.

Long before that, in the years between the wars, when capitalism seemed to have been stabilised after being saved from the first post-war slump and the stormy aftermath of the First World War, and the social revolution in Russia had been confined to its native land, a far-seeing political leader who had taken a prominent part in the struggle to defend the old order and defeat the Russian Revolution, paid a striking tribute to Mussolini as the founder of Italian Fascism, and to Fascism as an example to capitalist statesmen in difficulties in the Western democracies.

In a statement to the Italian and foreign Press in Rome on January 20th, 1927, Mr. Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Baldwin Government that restored the gold standard under the pressure of Anglo-American bankers, with such disastrous consequences to British production and trade, said that if he had been an Italian he would certainly have been whole-heartedly with Mussolini from start to finish in his "triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism," and that as regarded its international aspects, the Fascist movement had rendered a service to the whole world.

"The great fear which has always beset every democratic leader or a working-class leader has been that of being under-

mined or overbid by someone more extreme than he. Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the masses of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilised society. She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. Hereafter no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against the cancerous growth of Bolshevism."

(On December 8th, 1944, Mr. Churchill justified this statement in the House.)

In a speech quoted in *The Times* of September 23rd, 1933, Mr. Lloyd George entreated the Government to proceed cautiously in dealing with Germany, because—

"if the Powers succeeded in overthrowing Nazism in Germany, what would follow? Not a Conservative, Socialist or Liberal régime, but extreme Communism. Surely that could not be their objective? A Communist Germany would be infinitely more formidable than a Communist Russia. The Germans would know how to run their Communism effectively. That was why every Communist in the world from Russia to America was praying that the Western nations should bully Germany into a Communist revolution."

A year later, on November 28th, 1934, Mr. Lloyd George returned to the charge and predicted that—

"In a very short time, perhaps in a year, perhaps in two, the Conservative elements in this country will be looking to Germany as the bulwark against Communism in Europe. She is planted right in the centre of Europe, and if her defence breaks down against the Communists . . . and Germany is seized by the Communists, Europe will follow; because the Germans would make the best job of it that any country could. Do not let us be in a hurry to condemn Germany. We should be welcoming Germany as our friend."

The views of a powerful section of the business and banking world, including leaders in the City and the F.B.I., were summed up by Sir Arthur Balfour, Chairman and Managing Director of Arthur Balfour Co., Ltd., Capital Steel Works, Sheffield, Chairman of High Speed Alloys, in a speech reported in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* of October 24th, 1933:

"With regard to Germany, something had been bound to happen. The people there lost everything in the war. While Germany was wonderfully equipped, scientifically and industrially, she had no working capital, and the prospects of the young people since the war had been almost nil. Either they were to have Communism or something else. Hitler had produced Hitlerism as they saw it to-day, and of the two he thought it was preferable.

"Will the Germans go to war again? I don't think there is any doubt about it, and the curious thing about it is that I am almost persuaded that some day we shall have to let the Germans arm or we shall have to arm them. With the Russians armed to the teeth and the tremendous menace in the east, Germany unarmed in the middle is always going to be a plum waiting for the Russians to take, and which we should have to defend if the Germans could not defend themselves. One of the greatest menaces to peace in Europe to-day is the totally unarmed condition of Germany."

In the thirties the expression of these views by prominent political leaders and business men, although they make startling reading to-day, did not cause a ripple of comment, for they were so generally held in the Conservative Party, the City and the F.B.I., and so freely uttered in *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, and Sunday and provincial papers owned by the great Press lords, not to mention Parliament, the Stock Exchange and the best clubs and bars, that they had become almost commonplaces and truisms in public life.

This is the psychological background of Conservative foreign policy in the years of appeasement. This is the mental and moral atmosphere in which the "National" Government took the decisions that lost the peace.

How their fundamental motive—to preserve the social order and the interests abroad of the propertied classes—worked out in their foreign policy of appeasing Fascist aggressors, cold-shouldering the Soviet Union, and sabotaging the collective system, and how tricky they had to be to stay in power with the support of a public opinion that wanted a foreign policy based on the Covenant, becomes clear if we examine their record. But please remember that our Tories sincerely believed, and still believe, that they were saving the country, and that it would be a disaster to civilisation if they were to lose power.

JAPAN AND GERMANY

Japan and the New Arms Race

JAPAN'S ATTACK ON CHINA began in Manchuria on September 18th, 1931. On February 27th, 1933, Sir John Simon made a statement in the House on the Government's policy in which he said that from the outset of the conflict they had decided to employ conciliation only, and in no circumstances to invoke those Articles of the Covenant that called for coercing an aggressor. He added:

"I am myself enough of a pacifist to take this view, that, however we handle this matter, I do not intend my own country to get into trouble about it."

Those who pointed out that this statement meant that the Government had abandoned the whole policy of collective security and defaulted on their solemn treaty obligations were accused of being warmongers. The defence of the Government's policy was that it was "realistic" because it would settle the conflict, and "peace-loving" because it would do so without involving us in war.

On March 10th, 1936, Sir John Simon confessed in the House of Commons that, whereas the annual Service estimates had been framed since the World War on the assumption that "the British Empire would not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years . . . the Disarmament Conference met in February, 1932, and that was the very year in which the ten-year rule had to be abandoned."

In other words, one year before Sir John Simon was professing to be a pacifist and accusing those who wanted us to stand by our treaty obligations to China of being warmongers, and at the very moment that the Government were telling the country and the world that they wanted disarmament and were giving a lead to the Disarmament Conference, they had made up their minds that they must begin preparing against the danger of being involved in another world war within ten years. That danger did not exist when the National Government came into office. It arose as the direct and immediate result of their policy of letting Japan rip in the Far East. On their own confession, they knew when they embarked on that policy that by appeasing

Japanese aggression they were allowing a new arms race to begin and had started a drift to world war.

To coerce Japan successfully would have meant enlisting the co-operation for the purpose of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., neither of which was a member of the League, but both of which were so directly concerned in the situation and so hostile to Japanese aggression that they would have been willing to work with the League. The United States in fact did so, but the U.S.S.R. was kept at arm's length by British Conservative hostility. The policy of applying the principles of the Covenant and the Nine-Power Treaty to the Far Eastern situation would have been difficult and risky. But it was not an impossible policy, and it was a policy to which we were pledged by the most solemn treaty obligations.

The point is that the Government never dreamed of even attempting any such policy. They were not thinking in those terms at all. Their view, expressed with the utmost suavity and delicacy by Sir John Simon in his speech in the House of February 27th, 1933, quoted above, was really the same as that of Mr. Amery, who said on the same occasion:

"I confess that I see no reason whatever why, either in act or in word or in sympathy, we should go individually or internationally against Japan in this matter. . . . Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stands condemned if we condemn Japan."

Mr. Amery went on to express his total disbelief in settling great problems of this sort on the basis of the Covenant, and concluded:

"I am afraid that there is a good deal of conscious or unconscious hypocrisy when we talk about the League of Nations, about disarmament and about peace. I have endured it for a good long time. At any rate, I have freed my soul this afternoon."

British and Japanese imperialism had been allied for many years in the Far East, and had always done business with each other on the basis of deals at the expense of China. The alliance had, it is true, been formally abrogated in 1922 under American and Dominion pressure. But the Foreign Office, the City, the F.B.I., and the Conservative politicians representing their view of the national interests, still thought in terms of the traditional policy of doing a deal with Japan, by giving the latter licence to butcher the Chinese and overrun their territory, provided the

Japanese promised to respect British trade, investments and concessions in China, which were the only interests the Government were concerned to defend.¹

They knew as early as February, 1932, on Sir John Simon's confession, that this policy might ultimately end in a world war, and decided that they must begin preparing against that contingency. But they persisted in the policy nevertheless, because the only alternative, that of co-operating with the Soviet Union as well as the United States, in order to help Chinese nationalism to defeat Japanese imperialism, was literally unthinkable to them. It was unthinkable because it would have meant releasing forces destructive to all imperialism in the Far East and ultimately to the antique Oriental social order in which Western capitalism has acquired a vested interest. True, the policy actually pursued has also destroyed British imperialism in the Far East, at the almost inconceivable price of a world war. But the relation of cause and effect in this case is not felt by those responsible, who regard the war in a spirit of fatalistic resignation, as though it were a natural phenomenon arising independently of their policy since 1931.

As the Government could not be honest about the nature and consequences of their policy of appeasement without endangering their tenure of power, and as they had no intention of abandoning that policy or relinquishing power, their only course was to deceive public opinion. And so, while resigning themselves to the necessity for preparing against the possibility of a world war in ten years as the direct result of appeasing Japan, they claimed that appeasement was a policy of peace, accused their opponents of being warmongers, professed ardent faith in disarmament and claimed to be giving a bold lead to the Disarmament Conference.

Nazi Germany and Rearmament

The Government soon found themselves in the same situation with regard to Hitler's Germany. Letting Japan rip in 1932 had assisted the Nazis to get into power and encouraged them to believe that they could get away with illegal rearmament.

Hitler came into power in March, 1933, and immediately started illegal rearmament on a big scale. The French, the Czechs (Little Entente) and the Poles promptly became alarmed, gathered information on the matter that they communicated to

¹ The F.B.I. actually sent a delegation to Japan to do a business deal with the Japanese conquerors of Manchuria. The "realists" returned empty-handed.

the British Government, which in any case had its own sources of information, and demanded instant coercive action in the shape of summoning Nazi Germany before the League on the charge of violating Chapter V of the Versailles Treaty, which imposed disarmament on Germany and provided for investigation by the League—and a blockade and even a military expedition in case Hitler defied the League's authority. There was no shadow of a danger of war at the time, as Germany was still so thoroughly disarmed as to be incapable of putting up any kind of fight against any great Power, or even against a Power like Poland.

With all these stirring events in the background, it is no wonder that, as Mr. Baldwin put it in the House on November 12th, 1936, with what he himself called "appalling frankness":

"From 1933, I and my friends were all very worried about what was happening in Europe. You will remember that at the time the Disarmament Conference was sitting in Geneva. You will remember at that time there was probably a stronger pacifist feeling running through this country than at any time since the war. I am speaking of 1933 and 1934. . . . My position as the leader of a great party was not altogether a comfortable one. I asked myself what chance was there . . . within the next year or two of that feeling being so changed that the country would give a mandate for rearmament? Supposing I had gone to the country and said that Germany was re-arming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacifist democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain."

Unfortunately, Mr. Baldwin's frankness stopped short of explaining why the Government rejected the French and Polish proposals to initiate joint action at Geneva to nip Hitler Germany's rearmament in the bud, if necessary by the use of force. Labour and Liberal opinion, which stood for collective security and hated Fascism, could not have opposed League action in this sense.

Nor did he explain why the National Government had actually helped Hitler to rearm: it granted licences for the export of aeroplane engines and parts to Germany, although the Versailles Treaty forbade Germany to have aeroplanes. It concluded the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which authorised Hitler to build a navy 35 per cent. the size of the British Navy, with nearly half (45 per cent.) of our submarines and the possibility

of going up to 100 per cent. in this department. This agreement was a violation of Chapter V of the Versailles Treaty, not only by Germany, but also by the National Government, and was concluded in spite of French protests. The Government defence of it was given in Sir Samuel Hoare's maiden speech in the House as Foreign Secretary on July 11th, 1935. He said the Government's attitude was "realist," that the Agreement was "profitable alike to peace and to the tax-payer," and that the "logical and juridical mind often sees things from an angle different from that of the empirical and the practical. But the Government have no apologies to make for a practical, all-round contribution to peace."

A curious light is cast on the state of mind at that time of the leaders of the Conservative Party in the National Government by a letter from Lord Londonderry to his wife in March, 1933, which he published some years later in *Ourselves and Germany*.

"It is no use complaining about the Disarmament Conference; the thing is to get it out of the way without the world being defied by Germany and a war initiated by the Little Entente as a war of prevention. That is the real danger now. The Little Entente are fairly strong and Germany is weak. If Germany rearms, the Little Entente's chances of security will seem to them to be diminishing. . . . The great difficulty now is not so much the acquisitive States—I mean those who were despoiled by the Treaty, although their case is hard enough—but the States which have acquired territorial extensions and are unwilling to cede anything."

This revelation is peculiarly interesting. It confirms the fact that the Baldwin Government not only knew the Nazis would rearm from the moment Hitler came into power and were prepared to tolerate it, but were determined to prevent any other State or group of States stepping in to stop Hitler while he was still too weak to make war. France, with the backing of her allies Poland and the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Roumania), as we have just seen, actually wanted to make such a proposal at Geneva, and was choked off by the Baldwin Government.

Even more interesting is the fact that this letter contains the germ of the policy that was to culminate five and a half years later in the betrayal and murder of the Czechoslovak Republic at Munich. Lord Londonderry's letter shows him not only eager to protect Hitler's rearmament in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, but perfectly aware that a rearmed Nazi Germany

would threaten her small eastern neighbour and demand the surrender of part of its territory, and looking forward to the time when the National Government would have to pin down Czechoslovakia on the butcher's block while Hitler carved the heart out of that little democracy. The only thing that worried Lord Londonderry was lest the intended victim, aware of his impending doom, should tackle and do in the butcher before the latter was ready.

The truth is once more that the appeasers knew from the outset that by refusing to strike down the Fascist régimes while they were weak and by letting them wax strong and defiant through intensive rearmament and successful aggression, they were drifting into a second world war—but that they deliberately preferred that alternative to the danger to the social and colonial order involved in stopping Fascist aggressors, while they could still be stopped without risk of a big war.

The plain fact is that the reason for the Government's policy of appeasing and rearming Hitler was that indicated by the quotations from Mr. Lloyd George (who evidently knew of the French, Polish, Czech, etc., proposals to coerce Hitler and was pleading with the Government not to listen to them), Sir Arthur Balfour and Lord Londonderry of 1933 and 1934 given above—namely, that at that time the National Government and the great bulk of their supporters positively *liked* the Nazi régime, in spite of its bestiality, because they looked upon it as a bulwark against Communism. By Communism they meant any advance toward socialism, any change in the social order that threatened the power and profits of big business at home or abroad.

Mr. Attlee was perfectly right when he declared, on February 14th, 1937, that the Government watched German rearmament and took no active steps to save the world from the consequences. They neither enforced the Treaty of Versailles nor pursued a policy of international co-operation and peace. "The fact is that the National Government has connived at German rearmament because of its hatred of Russia. It has sown the wind and is reaping the whirlwind."

In those early years the Nazi régime was insecure in the saddle, and there was still an immense underground resistance in Germany. It took years of propaganda, aided by fear, appeasement and success before Hitler really conquered the minds of the German people. Any coercion to stop German rearmament in 1933 or 1934 could not have been resisted by him and his fellow gangsters, and would have been welcomed by so many people in Germany and have been such a shock to the régime that its overthrow would have followed. That was precisely

why the National Government determined to oppose any coercion and allowed Hitler to reararm rather than endanger his régime by getting tough with it.

Once again it was impossible for the Government to explain to the people of this country that they were risking a world war within a few years, rather than take action to nip the menace in the bud at the price of encouraging the forces of social change. Once more the only way out of the difficulty was to try to prove that Abraham Lincoln was wrong when he said you cannot fool all the people all the time. And so we find Mr. Baldwin, on July 11th, 1931, saying that—

Conservative Pledges of Disarmament

"We are bound by treaty and by honour to international disarmament. The cause of peace is going to be aided by international disarmament."

This was a straightforward repetition of the policy to which all parties had been pledged since the Peace Conference, and which was embodied in Article VIII of the Covenant. It was followed by the further statement, in a letter to the Conservative candidate at the Skipton by-election in November, 1933, that—

"We as a nation have set an example to the world by disarming to the utmost length compatible with security, and I would point out that this disarmament was carried out almost entirely by the Conservative Government and the Coalition Government, in which the Conservative Party predominated."

This statement was followed, as late as 1936, in another letter to a Conservative candidate, by the further statement that—

"The whole country irrespective of parties is solidly united in favour of peace and disarmament by international agreement."

The letter denied "as calculated and mischievous lies any statement which said the Conservative Party did not believe in these principles."

In short, the National Government was on the one hand pursuing policies of appeasement of Fascist régimes and their aggressions which were so unpopular in the country that it could defend them only by alleging that they were policies that led to peace and accusing the believers in the policy of collective security against aggression of being warmongers. On the other

hand, the Government were increasingly aware that their appeasement policy had in fact allowed a new arms race to start and the drift to a second world war to get under way, and decided that they must begin preparing against this contingency.

But they could not undecieve public opinion about the true nature and consequences of appeasement without being compelled to change their policy and even endangering their hold on power. They were determined to go on with appeasement and to cling to power, come what may, in defence of the existing social and imperial order.

And so they found themselves committed to the impossible enterprise of embarking on rearmament against States which they were refusing to take any risk of fighting and with whom they said they were seeking and achieving peace, and of doing so moreover under the guise of wholehearted devotion to disarmament and on the economic basis of "business as usual."

If it were really true that the Government, as they publicly alleged, were engaged in leading the world in disarmament, after they had secretly decided that they must prepare against the danger of a world war in ten years, the members of the Government would have deserved impeachment. But in fact they were doing no such thing. They were merely lying to the British people because they wanted to hang on to power while pursuing a policy for which they knew they could never secure popular approval if its true nature and consequences were revealed.

CHAPTER V

THE QUESTION OF DISARMAMENT

Humbug about Disarmament

THERE IS SO MUCH NONSENSE talked to-day about disarmament between the wars that it is worth going into the matter a little more fully.

All States at the end of the last war cut down their swollen wartime defence establishments to a peace basis. All States who became members of the League accepted the obligation in the Covenant to reduce and limit armaments by international agreement to the lowest levels compatible with national safety and the fulfilment of international obligations. The two great non-League members, the United States and the Soviet Union, co-operated in this enterprise, the former through the Washington Conference in 1922 and subsequent conferences, and both

through the Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference and in the Conference itself. The question of how to bring about reduction and limitation of armaments by international agreement came up at the first Assembly in November, 1920, and was continually discussed from then on. The formal preparation of the Disarmament Conference began six years before it met.

In this country every party accepted the Covenant, including the obligation to take part in the collective enterprise of reducing and limiting armaments by international agreement. From the Armistice until 1932 every Government in this country framed its annual Service estimates on the assumption that there was no foreseeable danger of our being involved in a major war within ten years. Even so, in the first twelve years after the Armistice (1918-30) we spent well over £1,000,000,000 on armaments (i.e. nearly £100,000,000 a year on the average). In 1930-1 the Labour Government spent £109,500,000 on armaments. The next year, 1931-2, the Labour Government spent £106,900,000. The National Government, in the Budget year 1932-3, spent £102,700,000.

The debating point might be made that the Conservative Party thus reduced armaments considerably as compared with the previous Labour Government, at the very time they had decided there was a danger of our being at war within ten years. But this would not be fair, because the Budget estimates were no doubt framed too early for this grave decision to affect them, and because the year under review was the very height of the slump, when the Government were practising drastic economy in every direction.¹ The figures for 1933-4, 1934-5 and 1935-6 are respectively, in millions of pounds, 107·3, 113·4 and 137·4. After that the figures mounted so rapidly that in the four years 1937 to 1939 inclusive we spent £2,000,000,000 on armaments, in Budgets and loans combined.

Why the Government Failed to Rearm

The fact is that there never was any unilateral disarmament, but that the National Government were inefficient in their rearmament. That was partly because they pursued a policy of deceiving public opinion, whereas only an informed public opinion would support the necessary measures; partly because they conducted rearmament on the basis of "business as usual," whereas partial industrial mobilisation, measures of State control

¹ That incidentally was a disastrous way to meet the slump, but that is another story.

and public enterprise, and the co-operation of the Trades Unions were necessary.

Take the crucial question of air armaments, for instance: Mr. Baldwin gave the most solemn assurances that we had air parity with Germany and would not allow the German air fleet to outstrip ours.

On March 8th, 1934, when tackled on the subject in the House by Mr. Churchill, Mr. Baldwin gave this specific undertaking:

"This Government will see to it that in air strength and air power this country shall never be in a position inferior to any country within striking distance of our shores."

When on November 28th, 1934, Mr. Churchill returned to the charge, challenging the Government to deny that Nazi Germany was rapidly overhauling us in the air, would have attained equality in a year, be 50 per cent. stronger in two years and twice as strong as this country in three years, Mr. Baldwin contradicted his figures, said there was no "immediate menace" or even "emergency," and declared that "His Majesty's Government are determined in no conditions to accept any position of inferiority with regard to what air force may be raised in Germany in the future."

In May, 1935, in addressing a meeting of his followers at the Albert Hall, Mr. Baldwin declared that—

"No government in this country could live a day that was content to have an Air Force of any inferiority to any country within striking distance of our shores."

The National Government under Chamberlain continued to behave as it had under Baldwin—that is, to fall behind Nazi air rearmament while denying the damning facts and charges hurled at them by Mr. Churchill and by Labour and Liberal leaders. The more the Opposition expressed their growing disquiet and concern, the more blandly the National Government misrepresented the situation and pretended that all was well in the domain of armaments.

In 1938 Mr. Chamberlain said we were "almost terrifyingly strong." Later (October 26th) that year his Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence (Sir Thomas Inskip) said: "Now we are at the middle of the third year of rearmament, there is in almost everything—I think I may say everything—a stream which might fairly be called a flood of the armaments and equipment which we need to complete our defences." On February 22nd, 1939, Mr. Chamberlain went one better:

"Our arms are so great that, without taking into account the Dominions' contribution—

*"Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them."*

These ringing declarations were accompanied by constant assertions that there would be no war, professions of friendship for and confidence in the Fascist dictators, and a stream of self-praise about the happy results of appeasement.

Meanwhile, on May 12th, 1938, Mr. Attlee, in a powerful speech, charged the Government with having entirely miscalculated the situation ever since it had been brought to their knowledge that a great air force was being built up in Germany. He stigmatised as absolute folly the Secretary of State for Air's assertion that if the Government had been in the same position then as they were now, with all their knowledge, they would have done exactly as they did then.

On May 25th, 1938, Mr. Hugh Dalton moved for a complete, searching and independent enquiry into the state of our air defences and the administration of the departments concerned, in the course of which he said:

"This leads me to the question of a Ministry of Supply. There is a tremendous case for a Ministry of Supply, and all the arguments I have been addressing to the House this afternoon converge upon the creation of such a new department. The Government two days ago in the House of Lords made a most feeble and inconclusive reply to a request for the creation of a Ministry of Supply.

"If the worst should come, I shall not envy the Prime Minister or his colleagues when they look back upon the vote which they will give to-day, if they vote against this inquiry. If the worst should come I shall not envy them when they remember that to-day they voted against holding an inquiry— independent, expeditious, competent and confidential as we propose—into our air defences, while there is yet time, though perhaps not much time. I shall not envy them when they look back and reflect upon the fact that they rejected that request made from these benches."

The Government and their docile Tory majority rejected the proposed enquiry by a huge majority.

"When war broke out," said Mr. Chamberlain on April 3rd, 1940, "German preparations were far ahead of our own." In particular, Hitler had a four to one superiority in the air.

It took three years' prodding by the Labour Party to induce the Government to appoint a Ministry of Supply. But rearmament still dragged because, as Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence—a gentleman, now elevated to the Peerage, who would have been more effective as a stage butler, or in his subsequent career of selecting Biblical texts for the *Daily Sketch*—observed on May 21st, 1936, it must not "impede the course of normal trade." This meant, as he confessed on the same occasion, that the new arms factories being built had not got priority over private firms in securing delivery of the necessary machine tools, although the latter were the bottle-neck. It was a case of profits before defence.

The shares of arms firms soared; contractors, as the Auditor-General's report has since shown, made 10, 20, 30, 60 and in one case even 82 per cent., profit on building warships. The big concerns managed to keep orders within the charmed circle of themselves and their friends.

The City, the F.B.I. and Conservative politicians conducted rearmament on the basis of the normal activities of private profit-making enterprise, which meant that it was turned into a vast racket by which hungry business men could more than recover the losses they had made during the slump. Profits were the main concern of the arms firms and shipbuilding yards, rather than equipping the country efficiently for defence. The net result was that a vast expenditure of money had a relatively small amount of armaments to show for it when appeasement finally ended in the Second World War.

The Nature of Labour's Opposition

The Labour Party's responsibility as H.M. Opposition was to try to bring the Government to their senses while there was yet time to save peace. What has already been related is enough to show that they did their duty as regards trying to prod the Government into rearming effectively and facing the realities of the situation. But Labour's chief duty was to endeavour to bring home to the Government how wrong and dangerous their foreign policy was, and to make them change it before it was too late. In pursuit of this duty, the Labour Party voted against the arms estimates for some time. But it did so, in the words of the Parliamentary Party's Manifesto on Armaments and Foreign Policy of July, 1936, "in order to make clear its entire opposition to the international policy of the Government, of which the rearmament programme is an integral part. . . . A vote against an estimate is not a vote for the abolition of the Service con-

cerned, but is a vote in opposition to the policy of which the estimate is the expression.

"Labour does not advocate unilateral disarmament. On the contrary, it has definitely declared its willingness to provide such defence forces as are required for this country to do its part in a system of collective security through the League of Nations."

On May 12th, 1938, Mr. Attlee rubbed in this point in the House:

"The Members on this side have always been prepared to support proper fighting services with a proper policy. . . .

"The Prime Minister said that we voted against the Estimates. . . . He knows perfectly what is the significance of voting against the Estimates. He knows that he and his friends have voted against the entire provision for Education, for Police and for the Foreign and Diplomatic Services. He knows that no Labour man has ever got up on the platform and said that they were opposed to all provision for education and police forces. . . . It is untrue that a vote against an Estimate in this House means that the party which voted against it desires that there should be no provision. It is well known that it is a vote against policy. Perhaps that will save anybody who is going to reply from taking up the Prime Minister's point."

It will probably not prevent the Tories trying to use Chamberlain's old gag as a red herring to draw off attention from the results of their own policy. But it should at any rate show that their *alibi* is a very stale bit of stinking fish left behind by the Great Appeaser.

In 1936, on the proposal of the National Executive, the Annual Conference of the Labour Party resolved that:

"In view of the threatening attitude of Dictatorships which are increasing their armaments at an unprecedented rate, flouting International Law, and refusing to co-operate in the work of organising peace, this Conference declares that the armed strength of the countries loyal to the League of Nations must be conditioned by the armed strength of the potential aggressors.

"The Conference, therefore, affirms the policy of the Labour Party to maintain such defence forces as are consistent with our country's responsibility as a Member of the League of Nations, the preservation of the people's rights and liberties, the continuance of democratic institutions, and the observance of International Law.

"Realising the relationship between foreign policy and armaments, and having regard to the deplorable record of the Government, the Labour Party declines to accept responsibility for a purely competitive armament policy. It reserves full liberty to criticise the rearmament programme of the present Government, and declares the continuance of vested interests in the private manufacture of arms to be a grave contributory danger to the Peace of the World.

"The Conference accordingly pledges the Labour Party to unceasing efforts, both by exposing the present Government's record of incompetence and betrayal of its peace pledges and by expounding our own positive International Policy, to secure the return of a Labour Government to power."

This was Labour's policy. It was expounded by Mr. A. V. Alexander in the House on July 20th, 1936:

"If this Government had really been true to their League pledges to the electorate, they had the chance of a lifetime of getting a really united nation behind them for League policy and freedom. The Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty knew perfectly well that at the Trades Union Congress last September and at the Labour Party annual conference last October, although it was very much criticised from some Labour angles and although there was difficulty, there was an overwhelming majority for standing behind the fulfilment of the Covenant of the League in its entirety. The Government, after getting a vote on this policy from the country, threw away their whole opportunity of having a united country behind them. What has happened now with regard to collective security? Collective security, to which lip-service is still given, is a thing of the past with the Government. . . .

"Even with armaments at double the strength we are being asked for to-night, unless the Government work through the League and for collective security they must know or ought to know perfectly well that they cannot defend the British Empire."

Returning to this subject in the House on February 18th, 1937, Mr. Alexander said:

"If you are really trying in this policy to arm this country on a unilateral defence basis, and suggesting that we can vote the money and organise to defend the British Empire, all that I can say is that you are exceedingly foolish. You have never

fought a major war yet without allies, and powerful allies, and you have no hope of defending the whole of the far-flung stretches of the British Commonwealth with unilateral defence. If that is the line that hon. Members take when they say, 'Will you defend your own country?' they are backing a very poor horse indeed."

Mr. Attlee, in the House on June 23rd, 1936:

"I say quite frankly that the Government have killed the League; the League may go on as a debating society, but the Government have killed it. . . . The Government have refused to take risks for peace, although that was their professed policy and their aim, and they have increased the risk of war. The result is that they have put this country in a dangerous position. This country's position is not what it was in pre-1914 days. It is not in the position in which it had an island stronghold here and a far-flung Empire. It now has its very heart connected with the Continent by the air. There is no security in isolation. The alternatives to isolation are alliances or collective security. The indictment against the Government is that when they had the opportunity of uniting Europe and forming a real front for collective security, they threw it away, and when they had the chance of uniting all the people in this country behind that policy, they threw it away."

Labour was speaking on these occasions in the light of their bitter experience of the Government's betrayal of their election pledges with regard to Abyssinia, of which more is said below.

Labour was equally clear and bold in pressing on the Government and public opinion its policy for rebuilding the collective system, wrecked by the Government's betrayals of China and Abyssinia. The National Executive's *Memorandum on War and Peace*, adopted by the Annual Conference in 1934; the 1935 General Election policy pamphlet, *For Socialism and Peace*; the resolution on the international situation submitted by the National Executive and adopted by the Annual Conference at Edinburgh in 1936—all these documents, and numerous statements by labour leaders, urged an alliance between the U.S.S.R., France and Great Britain within the League as the steel framework of peace in Europe, and co-operation of this group with the U.S.A. as the foundation of world peace. As the late Mr. Arthur Henderson wrote in *Labour's Way to Peace*:

"Even before the Soviet Union entered the League [in 1935] the Labour Party spoke of full co-operation with the U.S.S.R."

our imperial interests in and around Abyssinia. In 1923 Abyssinia was admitted to the League of Nations. In 1925 the Baldwin Government proposed to Mussolini to do a deal on the basis of the 1906 treaty, the 1915 agreement, and the 1919 proposals, that would, as Mussolini pointed out later, have virtually meant carving up Abyssinia. The agreement reached was dropped when Abyssinia sent an indignant note of protest to the League, containing the following pertinent remarks:

"... On our admission to the League of Nations we were told that all nations were to be on a footing of equality within the League, and that their independence was to be universally respected, since the purpose of the League is to establish and maintain peace among men in accordance with the will of God. . . .

"We were not told that certain members of the League might make a separate agreement to impose their views on another member, even if the latter considered those views incompatible with its national interests. . . ."

Fascist schemes to conquer Abyssinia and Fascist reliance on British Tory sympathy were naturally not discouraged by this episode. Matters came to a head in the great slump.

Mussolini Openly Plans Aggression

By 1932 the slump had hit Italy so hard that the Fascist régime was in difficulties, and Mussolini felt it necessary to regain popularity by embarking on a little war.¹ As he himself subsequently boasted, his choice fell on Abyssinia after long and careful consideration.

The British Somaliland Administration was aware of Italian plans and ambitions as early as 1932. The Abyssinian Government knew in July, 1934, that Mussolini had sent Marshal Badoglio and an Italian Military Commission to Eritrea (the Italian colony bordering on Abyssinia) to investigate and report upon the prospects of the campaign, and that the despatch of Italian troops began next month.

Sir Sydney Barton, the British Minister to Addis Ababa (the Abyssinian capital), did all in his power to warn the Government of what was impending and to stir them to action. The flow of Italian troops and war material through the Suez Canal began in the autumn of 1934 and swelled to a flood in the first months

¹ In his speech of August 12th, 1935, referred to below, General Smuts bluntly said that Mussolini's Abyssinian adventure was due to the fact that his régime found itself in a tight corner at home.

of 1935. As the British Government control the Suez Canal, they could not possibly have been ignorant of the fact. The Italian Press boasted openly that the Italian Government were keeping in close touch with the British Government and informing them of their views and plans. Mr. Amery confirmed this statement in the House (see below). Throughout the winter, spring and summer of 1935 it was known that Mussolini would attack early in October, so soon as the rainy season had ceased.

Mussolini Picks a Quarrel

This is the background to the quarrel picked by Italy with Abyssinia at the end of 1934 when Italian troops, who had for some time been crossing the Abyssinian frontier, penetrated as far as Walwal, sixty miles within Abyssinian territory, and attacked the Abyssinian garrison.

Sabotage at Geneva, January-June, 1935

Early in January, 1935, Abyssinia brought the matter before the League under Article XI of the Covenant. In March the Abyssinian Government invoked Articles X and XV of the Covenant and begged the League to take speedy measures to put an end to the danger of war. The Emperor said his country's very existence was menaced by Italy's war preparations, and reminded the members of the League of their solemn duty under Article X.

In April the British, French and Italian Governments met at Stresa—but the subject of Abyssinia was not raised.

During the whole of this period, and again at the Council meeting on May 25th, the British Government successfully used its influence to keep the League from dealing with the matter, and instead put pressure on the Abyssinians to attempt to settle it by "direct negotiations" with Italy.

On June 7th in the House of Commons, Mr. Attlee, as acting Leader of the Opposition, made a vigorous statement on the Italo-Abyssinian war danger, referring in the strongest terms to the Italian attitude and preparations, and imploring the Government to take action before it was too late.

"We require a clear statement by our Government. We want to tell Signor Mussolini that among the political realities of which he has to take account is that this Government, like other Governments, upholds the Covenant against an aggressor State, that it believes it is a matter that affects our honour and

our vital interests, that the refusal to accept the League's authority constitutes a refusal by an aggressor, and that we shall in that event be bound under Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant, to see that we give no assistance whatever to an aggressor, but, on the contrary, that we are bound to act against an aggressor.

"The vital point in this matter is the question of the control of the Suez Canal. If Italy were to count on the fact that the League would not act if she intended to use force, she ought to be told frankly that in that event she would not have the use of the Suez Canal. This is really a vital matter, and it ought to be decided at once. A statement ought to be made now. It is not even fair to the Government of Signor Mussolini that he should be left in any doubt on this matter. In a matter of this kind, the longer the time, the more difficult it is to get acceptance, because a matter of prestige is involved. There are movements of troops; there is an enormous expenditure on the military machine. The matter has already drifted too far."

Mr. Eden, in reply, stated that the Government did not think it proper to suspect Italy of aggression, but were doing their utmost to extend their good offices to both parties without being "animated by any desire to oppose Italian influence in Ethiopia. Our rights in that country are already amply protected by treaty. In fact, there is no reason whatever why British and Italian interests should not be mutually and harmoniously developed side by side for neither do they nor need they conflict. . . . It has been our constant, our persistent endeavour, to help bring about a permanent settlement mutually satisfactory to Italy and Ethiopia; a settlement which would take account of our responsibility and those of France and Italy in the Tripartite Treaty of 1906 . . . and a settlement which would lie within the framework of the Covenant."

Why did the Government do nothing whatever in the crucial months between January and June, when Italian war preparations were proceeding apace, publicly and brazenly? What did Mr. Eden mean by his reference to the "harmonious and mutual development of British and Italian interests in Abyssinia" and by a policy based on the pre-war imperialist Treaty of 1906 for the division of Abyssinia into spheres of influence, but at the same time within the framework of the Covenant?

The Italian Offer of January 29th, 1935

The answer is that on January 29th, 1935, the Italian *Chargé d'Affaires* called at the Foreign Office and proposed conversations

"to consider specific agreements for the mutual and harmonious development of British and Italian interests in Ethiopia" (the very phrase used by Mr. Eden in the House on June 7th).

In the light of the 1906 and 1915 Treaties, the 1919 offer and the 1925 exchange of Notes, of the Walwal incident and of the Italian war preparations on the borders of Abyssinia, it was perfectly plain what this invitation meant. Mussolini was not far from the truth when he insisted later that he had taken the British Government into his confidence in the first few months of 1935. It was to this visit by the Italian *Chargé d'Affaires* that Mr. Amery was referring when he told the House (see below) that the Italian Government had kept our Government informed of its plans from the beginning.

The reply of a British Government that was honest about the Covenant would have been that (a) Italy and Abyssinia were both parties to a conflict that was *sub judice* before the League; (b) there was reason to fear that the Italian Government contemplated aggression against the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia; (c) therefore the Government must decline to discuss any matter affecting Italo-Abyssinian relations except at Geneva, and must warn the Italian Government that upholding the Covenant against aggression was regarded by His Majesty's Government as a matter of honour and vital interest. A few months later Mr. Baldwin publicly stated that any attack on the integrity and independence of Egypt would be regarded as an unfriendly act. Why was not some warning of this sort given to Mussolini about Abyssinia in relation to our obligations as a member of the League, in reply to his invitation to enter into conversations for the partition of Abyssinia? Why was he not told that the defence of the Covenant was a major British interest?

For the simple reason that it never entered the heads of the National Government to look upon the treaty obligations of the Covenant as a national interest, nor to apply the Covenant to this dispute, and that on the contrary they immediately accepted the Italian invitation to discuss the terms of a "colonial" deal.

Blueprint for an Imperialist Deal

For this purpose they appointed an interdepartmental Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir John Maffey, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office, to consult the various British Colonial Administrations affected, in order to examine the issues raised by the Italian invitation of January 29th, 1935, and to provide them with data for a reply.

Although the Maffey Report was an ultra-secret document, the Italians got hold of it and published lengthy extracts in the *Giornale d'Italia* of February, 1936, which were reproduced the next day in *The Times* and other British papers.

The data for a reply to the Italian invitation were summed up by the report in nine points. The first says:

"Italy will during the coming years certainly do her utmost to secure control of Abyssinia, even if at the present moment she may intend only to limit her action to conquering the lowlands which border on Italian Somaliland."

The remaining points discuss how to safeguard British commercial, colonial and defence interests in the event of Italy conquering Abyssinia. Points three and nine are worth quoting:

"(3) Should Abyssinia disappear as an independent State, the British Government should try to obtain territorial control over the Lake [Tsana] and over a corridor joining it with the Sudan.

"(9) The opportunity should be seized if possible to rectify the boundaries of British Somaliland, Kenya and the Sudan so as to incorporate those adjoining localities which have bonds of economic and ethnical affinity."

Mr. Eden, in the House on February 24th, 1936, while refusing a pressing Labour request to publish the Maffey Report and stoutly asserting that British policy had throughout been based on the Covenant, and the Report was a mere fact-finding document not intended to suggest a course of action—an assertion which the published extracts from the Report scarcely support and which the actions of the Government contradict—admitted that—

"towards the end of January, 1935, when the Abyssinian situation was already a cause of preoccupation to His Majesty's Government as a member of the Council of the League, an enquiry was made by the Italian Government as to the nature and extent of British interests in Abyssinia. An inter-departmental Committee was thereupon set up under the chairmanship of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, for the purpose of estimating British interests in Abyssinia and attempting an appreciation of the extent to which these interests might be affected by external events. . . . The Committee's investigation naturally occupied some time. . . . The Committee reported to my Rt. Hon. friend, the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on 18th June last, and

its report was to the effect that there was no important British interest in Abyssinia with the exception of Lake Tsana, the waters of the Blue Nile and certain tribal grazing rights."

Until the Maffey Committee reported, the Government's policy was to stall for time, to keep Abyssinia at arm's length from the League, and to stay on good terms with Mussolini. The moment the Committee reported, Mr. Eden was sent to Rome at the end of June, 1935, to begin the first of the many attempts from then until the Hoare-Laval deal in December, to do business with Italy on the basis of the Maffey Report—that is, on the basis of conniving at Italy's annexation of the lowlands of Abyssinia provided for the time being she left the mountainous half alone, or at any rate shared concessions and advisers with France and Britain.

Abortive Eden-Mussolini, Eden-Laval and other Deals

In his Rome conversations, Mr. Eden suggested that a "compromise" on these lines might be sweetened as regards Abyssinia and look better if Abyssinia were offered a small strip of British territory giving her an outlet to the sea. The strip, through a desert, was the famous "corridor for camels to Zeila."¹

The effect of this offer on Signor Mussolini was made plain at the time in a despatch from its diplomatic correspondent covering the Rome conversations, that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, and said that the Italians were not satisfied with the cession of some of the desert country in the lowlands, but wanted the fertile uplands of Abyssinia (i.e. the whole country). The Italian Press was clamorous on the point that half-measures were useless and Italy must make a complete job of it and take the whole country, for if half were left independent, the free Abyssinians would be discontented and continually try to get back what they had lost.

These Eden-Mussolini conversations in Rome were not disturbed by the fact that on June 19th the Abyssinian Government, in a further Note to the League, had pointed out that the Italian Government had not ceased sending to East Africa (through the Suez Canal) "troops and munitions of war in large quantities, and that it accompanied these despatches with inflammatory harangues and speeches full of threats to Ethiopia's independence

¹ The reported offer of a cession of Empire territory aroused quite a lot of indignation among the very Conservatives, who looked upon the tearing up of the Covenant and the assassination of Abyssinia with indifference, if not approval.

and integrity." The Note pointed to the danger of frontier incidents, urged the League to send neutral observers immediately and offered to pay for them. No notice was taken.

On July 10th in the House of Commons Mr. Mander asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs "whether he will represent to the Italian Government that in the matter of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute it is for this country a matter of honour and vital interest not to default on our obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations?"

Mr. Eden returned an evasive reply full of appeasement and goodwill to Italy.

The next day Sir Samuel Hoare made his maiden speech in the House as Foreign Secretary, in the course of which he asserted that—

"I should like to make it clear that we have always understood and well understand Italy's desire for overseas expansion. . . . In the present negotiations we showed our willingness to endeavour to ensure for Italy some territorial satisfaction by reasonable and legitimate arrangements with Abyssinia. . . . We admit the need for Italian expansion."

Sir Samuel went on to express British sympathy for Italian aspirations and with some of the Italians criticism of the Abyssinian Government. "But are the facts that Italy needs expansion, and that complaints are made against the Abyssinian Government, sufficient cause for plunging into a war? We have surely found in the past that it is possible to adjust demands and differences of this kind without recourse to war, and I am not prepared even now to abandon any chance that may present itself for averting what I believe will be a calamity, whether it be through the machinery of the 1906 Treaty, or whether it be through the machinery of the League, or whether it be through both. . . . We are working on these lines."

On July 21st Mussolini in an interview in the *Echo de Paris* announced that after pondering the whole problem and preparing with meticulous care he was about to conquer and colonise Abyssinia, and poured contempt on the notion that the League could be a tribunal before which negroes and savages could drag the great nations of the world.

On July 24th the Cabinet met to consider the situation, failed to make up its mind, adjourned the question and dispersed for the holidays.

Mr. Eden went to the July 31st League Council meeting at Geneva, only to work hand in hand with M. Laval for securing

postponement until September 4th, on the basis of once more referring the Abyssinians to what was virtually direct negotiations with Italy, while the three Great Powers, France, Great Britain and Italy, were to endeavour to agree on a common policy, between themselves and without Abyssinia, on the basis of the 1906 Treaty.

On August 1st there was a further debate in the House in which the deep disquiet of public opinion came to light and the Government was strongly urged to take action. In response, Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden once more deprecated any idea of coercing Italy and pledged their faith to "conciliation"—that is, to buying off Mussolini by offering him parts of Abyssinia, in disregard of our obligation under Article X of the Covenant to respect and to preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of that country.

In the middle of August Mr. Eden, M. Laval and Baron Aloisi, Mussolini's envoy, met in Paris, in order, as Mr. Lloyd George put it, to discuss "what measure of economic and strategic and political control can be given to Italy without war. How they can deliver Abyssinia on the cheap to Italy—that is the question which is being discussed."

In these negotiations, an Eden-Laval "deal" was offered to Baron Aloisi by which Italy would have taken the lowlands at once and joined with France and Britain in imposing advisers, the lion's share being Italian, on the Abyssinian Emperor to "help" him govern the rest. When Mussolini turned down this offer, Baron Aloisi was asked to submit alternative proposals. On Aloisi refusing, he was asked to say what Italy wanted, and replied, "*Tout*" ("Everything").

After that there were some heated exchanges between Mr. Eden and Baron Aloisi. The latter gave his view of the situation with cheerful cynicism on his return to Geneva from the Paris negotiations: "*A Paris on se croyait entre fripouilles. Et l'affaire ratée, voilà une des fripouilles qui devient honnête homme.*" (Free translation: "At Paris we were getting on fine on the basis of all being scallywags together, until we failed to do a deal—and then one of the scallywags suddenly did the heavy gentleman on me" i.e. talked about the Covenant.)

To do Mr. Eden justice, there was no doubt about it at all that he longed to apply the Covenant to the dispute from the beginning; his instructions forbade him to do so, but when he got the chance he could at any rate let off steam by talking about it.

Just before the Paris negotiations, General Smuts made a resounding speech on August 12th, in which he said:

"This adventure cannot be looked upon as an isolated move. I think it will shake the whole system of civilisation to its foundation should the League fail at the critical moment. . . . Europe will go back to its pre-war system of alliances, and will divide into hostile camps wherein anything might happen."

But in spite of this warning and the agitation of public opinion, and Mussolini's unabashed public avowal of his aggressive intentions, and the patent fact of his preparations for war, the attempt to do a deal in Paris in August took place.

When it broke down a special Cabinet meeting was summoned, to which Mr. Baldwin hurried from his holiday at Aix-les-Bains. Mr. MacDonald said we were facing the gravest crisis since 1914.

But once more appeasement of Mussolini was the only policy on which the Cabinet could agree. And so a fresh attempt was made at Geneva in September through the so-called Committee of Five appointed by the Council under Anglo-French pressure. The Committee was instructed to frame a "basis of negotiation," founded on the abortive Paris proposals. This led to a public refusal by Litvinov to sit on the Committee of Five, on the ground that the Paris proposals were so imperialist that he could not take part in framing even suggestions for negotiations on such a basis.

The Committee of Five's report was a chastened version of the Paris proposals, which was silent about the nationality of the "advisers" that the Abyssinian Emperor must appoint, and insisted that they must enjoy his confidence, and said nothing directly about Italy acquiring Abyssinian territory. But in an annexe to the report, Great Britain and France agreed, as at Paris, to offer Abyssinia an outlet to the sea through Somaliland (that famous "corridor for camels" again), in return for Abyssinia giving up unspecified territories to Italy. They further undertook to "look with favour on the conclusion of economic agreements between Italy and Ethiopia on condition that the existing rights of French and British nationals and protected persons are respected by the two parties and that the recognised interests of France and the United Kingdom under all agreements already in force are safeguarded." The Abyssinians accepted and the Italians rejected this basis of negotiation.

The Episode of Sanctions

By this time—September, 1935—public opinion at home had got so worked up that something had to be done. A few members of the Government and their supporters really wanted to coerce

Italy and uphold the Covenant. The great majority wanted to do a deal with Mussolini, partitioning Abyssinia on the basis of the 1906 Treaty, but believed that if they did this before the election they would be voted down at the polls. And so they decided to go just as far in applying sanctions (i.e. measures to coerce Italy) as was necessary to convince the electorate that they meant business with upholding the Covenant, while not going so far as to involve any risk of war with Italy.

Accordingly, on September 10th, Sir Samuel Hoare privately told Laval (who passed it on to Mussolini) that there was no question of taking any action that Italy would resent sufficiently to go to war, but only of measures of boycott that involved no risk of war. The next day—September 11th, 1935—he made his famous speech in the Assembly about “steady and collective resistance to aggression” which is quoted below.

This was followed early in October by the decision of the League of Nations to apply economic sanctions, i.e. measures of boycott and embargoes on trade relations with Italy. A committee was appointed to co-ordinate the sanctions being applied. But before going on to describe what the Government actually did after they had publicly joined in deciding that Italy was an aggressor and must be coerced, let us look at the reasons why the Government took their decision.

Collective Security and Public Opinion

During the summer of 1935, public opinion was getting more and more agitated and the demand for taking a strong line with Italy became increasingly insistent. The Labour and Liberal Parties, the Trade Unions and Co-operatives, the Church and the Nonconformists, were bestirring themselves and arousing a response that began to make the Government and their supporters uncomfortable. An election was due in the autumn.

Finally, the League of Nations Union, which had been pretty active all along, organised a monster Peace-through-Collective-Security Ballot that turned out to be a resounding success. A nation-wide canvass was carried out through the services of half a million volunteers. About twelve million people voted. The ballot was limited to persons over eighteen years of age. They were required to answer “Yes” or “No” to the following five precise questions:

1. Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?
2. Are you in favour of an all-round reduction of armaments by international agreement?

3. Are you in favour of the all-round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?

4. Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreement?

5. Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by—

(a) economic and non-military measures?

(b) If necessary, military measures?

There was an enormous majority for the "Ayes" on every question. On 5 (a)—that is, on the necessity for collective economic and non-military measures to stop an aggressor—there were 10,096,626 "Ayes" and 639,195 "Noes."

On 5 (b)—that is, on the necessity for proceeding to combined military measures to compel an aggressor to stop who would not yield to economic measures—the "Ayes" were 6,833,803 against 2,366,184 "Noes."

It will be observed that there were a large number of abstentions on the question of whether it was necessary collectively to go to war against an aggressor that could not be stopped by other means, but that there was a nearly three to one majority in favour of military measures among the eight million and more who replied.

The Labour and Liberal Parties officially took part in conducting the Peace Ballot. So did a Conservative Women's Organisation and several Conservative groups and prominent personalities. But the Conservative Party boycotted the Peace Ballot, and many of its leaders, including members of the Government as well as the chief Conservative newspapers, derided, opposed, sabotaged and misrepresented the Ballot without shame or stint.

They did not, however, attempt in those days, as certain Conservative politicians and newspapers are doing to-day, to suggest that the Ballot was a "peace at any price" ballot. For in those days, the shining garments and white flower of pacifism were being somewhat unconvincingly worn by the hard-bitten Tories and prosperous business men who were backing the appeasers. And so the Peace Ballot was denounced at the time as a "blood ballot" and its supporters were referred to as crazy fanatics and warmongers.

When the Ballot succeeded on a scale that showed there was a formidable volume of opinion in support of collective security, the Government and the Conservative Party were in a tight spot. But they got out of it without changing their policy.

"Honest" Mr. Baldwin and his henchmen, who had already decided on his own confession that it was necessary to fool public opinion about armaments in order to win the election, concluded that it was equally necessary to deceive the public about their real policy with regard to Italy and their real attitude to the Covenant.

Therefore, as Viscount Cecil put it in his introduction to the *Official History of the Peace Ballot*, with a touch of complacency that in retrospect is not without pathos:

"Since the Peace Ballot was started, there can be no doubt that a great change has come over the tone of public statements about the League. Up to a year ago official references to the League were rare and, when they did occur, they were politely sceptical. They reminded me of the way in which M. Clemenceau always began his conversations on the subject: 'I like the League,' he would say, 'I like the League—but I do not believe in it.' Now that tone has almost vanished. When it made its reappearance in the recent White Paper on Defence, it was greeted with such widespread disapproval that I hope we have seen the last of it. Certainly most ministerial utterances on the subject are of a very different character. When the Lord Privy Seal [Mr. Eden] recently professed his conviction that reliance on the League was our only hope, his was no longer the voice of one crying in the ministerial wilderness, but rather a clear and vigorous repetition of the now usual official praise of the collective system."

As an example of the change in the Government's public statements, let us quote Mr. Baldwin in Glasgow on November 23rd, 1934: "It is curious that there is growing among the Labour Party support for what is called a collective peace system. Well now, a collective peace system in my view is perfectly impracticable. . . . It is hardly worth considering." On and after May 7th, 1935, and in the Government's autumn election manifesto, Mr. Baldwin declared that "the League of Nations is the sheet anchor of British foreign policy."

Sir Samuel Hoare, in his famous speech at Geneva on September 11th,¹ announced that—

"In conformity with its precise and explicit obligations, the League stands and my country stands with it for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety and particularly

¹ Which there is good reason to believe was written by Mr. Eden, who put his soul into it, hoping, and perhaps even believing, that it might become the policy of the Government.

for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. The attitude of the British nation in the last few weeks has clearly demonstrated the fact that this is no variable and unreliable sentiment, but a principle of international conduct to which they and their Government hold with firm, enduring and universal persistence."

He claimed that—

"the recent response of public opinion shows how completely the nation supports the Government in the full acceptance of the obligations of League membership, which is the oft-proclaimed keynote of its foreign policy."

This was a public and official admission by the Foreign Secretary that the Government understood what the Peace Ballot really meant—namely, that there was overwhelming public support in this country "for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression."

The Government and Collective Security

Unfortunately, however, the Government never intended to apply sanctions honestly. From start to finish they never dreamed of defeating Mussolini to vindicate the Covenant. Their policy always was to do a deal with Mussolini for the partition of Abyssinia on the basis of the 1906 Treaty, 1915 and 1919 Agreements, 1925 exchange of Notes, Maffey Report, etc., on terms safeguarding British and French interests in and around Abyssinia.

What the Government actually did in the matter of sanctions is described below.

At this point it is necessary to expose the hollowness of the pretence of their conversion to collective security. The pretence was mercilessly exposed by Mr. Amery, speaking as a supporter of the Government and opponent of sanctions in the House on October 23rd, 1935. He complained that the Government had been landed in the "unsatisfactory situation" of applying sanctions to Italy because they had abandoned "the policy toward the League of Nations and more particularly towards Article 16 of the Covenant, which they had pursued for some ten years," and had instead adopted "a policy which up to the last few months they repudiated and even treated with scorn":

"From the very outset there have been two schools of thought about the League and about our obligations under the League. There has been the school to which I belong, and to which for years, I believe, the Government of this country belonged, that regards the League as a great institution, an organisation for promoting co-operation and harmony among the nations, for bringing about understanding, a permanent Round Table of the nations in conference, a standing machinery for conciliation for the benefit of all who were willing to be conciliated, the centre and focus of innumerable beneficent international activities, growing greatly in authority and influence and in universality, but provided always it did not have at the background the threat of coercion.

"There is the other school which thinks that the actual Articles of the Covenant . . . constitute a sacrosanct dispensation which would have introduced a new world order, and, if they were only loyally adhered to, abolish war for good and all. . . .

"There were those, the believers in the League of coercion, who endeavoured to see whether the policy of the League, from their point of view, could not have been made good, and who endeavoured to find ways and means of making its action swifter and more efficient. They embodied therein what is known as the Geneva Protocol. The Government of which I had the honour to be a member, as well as my right hon. friend here, with the complete support of all the Dominions, unhesitatingly rejected the Geneva Protocol. The reasons for rejecting that Protocol were reasons which in fact and in substance were a rejection of Article 16, just as much as they were a rejection of the Protocol itself. . . .

"The case I wish to put to the House is that the stand taken by His Majesty's Government then and the arguments which they used were not arguments merely against the Protocol, but arguments against the whole conception of a League based on economic and military sanctions."

That was the policy, said Mr. Amery, that had been consistently followed by the Government.

"The Government by its actions, which speak louder than words showed that it did not regard itself pledged in honour to literal fulfilment of Article 16.

"MR. MASON: Quote.

"MR. AMERY: Japan in Manchuria and Shanghai. If it were a matter of a pledge of honour, we were just as much

obligated then as now. The reason why the British Government refused to be obligated was not cowardice on the part of the Government, but because it did not take the view of the obligations of the Covenant which hon. Members opposite take and which apparently has been taken by the Government in the last few months. If hon. Members want quotations, I will give them a few; I am only too happy to do so—quotations to show that the Government repudiated the whole idea of what is called the collective peace system.”

Mr. Amery then proceeded to quote Mr. Baldwin on November 23rd, 1934, and again on March 11th, 1935, when he dismissed the system of collective security as beyond the scope of practical politics and said that in existing circumstances there was nothing left “but to try to secure this corner and that corner in the different parts of Europe.” That, observed Mr. Amery, was on March 11th, “six weeks after Signor Mussolini first informed us of his intentions about Abyssinia [i.e. on January 29th, as related above], three weeks after the demonstrative departure of two Italian divisions for Africa. It was hardly an academic statement then, but a statement that must have been made with full knowledge of the situation that was growing up in connection with Abyssinia.”

After quoting Sir Austen Chamberlain in favour of Locarno and the balance of power and against any general obligation to stop aggressors (i.e. against the whole conception of collective security), Mr. Amery submitted in evidence Lord Londonderry’s speech in the House of Lords on July 27th on behalf of the Government, saying that the Government did not consider that the League of Nations existed “for the purpose of imposing its will upon any single nation or group of nations by the exercise of physical force.” The League was there for the pacific settlement of international disputes, not to abolish war by means of war. “On the other hand, the Socialists’ view is nothing more or less than the employment in the last resort of compulsion by force of arms.”

That indeed, said Mr. Amery, had always been the view of the Socialist Party and somewhat less emphatically of the Liberals:

“But for ten years at any rate, the view that we were under an obligation to carry out Article 16 of the Covenant, to carry out sanctions, has been repudiated by the British Government in action and speech. . . . Of course, that policy has had its advocates. It was championed by France. . . . It has been

believed by all those small nations who look to the League for a permanent guarantee for their territorial acquisitions. It is also represented by that curious crowd which always gathers around at Geneva and gives it an air of unreality. . . .

"I know that view is also held in this country. Lord Cecil has taught that view persistently throughout. It has been supported by a good many on the other side of the House of Commons. In the Peace Ballot last year he was able to launch a direct challenge of the whole position taken up by the Government. I wish the Government had answered that challenge by direct argument, as it answered the Protocol. Instead, it took the line of saying the way in which the questions were put was misleading. The Conservative Central Organisation, the National Unionist Association, were not prepared to co-operate with the Peace Ballot, but made it clear that in their opinion the questions were misleading. . . .

"My right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham [Sir Austen Chamberlain] said, with regard to the framing of the questions by the authors of the Peace Ballot:

"No graver misstatement of the issues at stake has ever been perpetrated even by a reckless partisan in the heat and fury of a contested election. The result will be proclaimed by its promoters as a national verdict. To me it appears to be little better than an attempt to obtain subscriptions by a fraudulent prospectus."

"(An hon. Member: 'Hear, hear.') I hope that my hon. friend will not cheer too soon. If he will refer to the *Hints for Speakers* issued from the Central Office on October 17th, and available for his use, he will find that, after some chaff about the Socialist leaders, it says:

"The National Government gave real and united expression to the views of the people as expressed in the Ballot."

The Government's Pacifist Economic Sanctions

However, said Mr. Amery (and here is where we come to the subject of what the Government actually did), although it was unsatisfactory that we had been committed to applying sanctions to Italy at all, he was happy to recall—

"that part of the Prime Minister's speech and that of the Secretary of State yesterday which many Members of the House more particularly welcomed—the declaration that war is not in question, that no measures of military sanctions or actions calculated to lead to war, like a blockade or the closing

of the Suez Canal, have ever formed any part of the Government's policy, 'that the actions that the Government have been considering are not military, but economic. The distinction is one between a boycott and a war.' I am glad that that distinction has been made so clear. I, at any rate, am now in a position to enter upon this election and to face my constituents as a whole-hearted supporter of the Government's policy of no war sanctions. . . . My old friend and colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Neville Chamberlain!] upbraided me a little severely the other day for venturing to say that I would not send a single Birmingham lad to his death for Abyssinia. I accept his rebuke. I shall not offend again. I shall go to my constituents henceforward and say: 'You have it on the authority of the Secretary of State and of the Government, who endorse every word that he said, that they are not prepared to send a single Birmingham lad to his death, either for Abyssinia or for Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.' I am glad that that has become abundantly clear. It will be a great relief to many of us. It will be a great relief to Europe. It eases the whole situation. Only I wonder why such a clear statement could not have been made two or three months earlier. It would have been kinder to hon. and right hon. Members opposite if that statement had been made earlier. It might have relieved them of a good deal of internal embarrassment. I think that the Government, if I may use a colloquial phrase, have sold the Labour Party a pup. They have led them to dismiss their old and trusted leader, and to dismiss another zealous—sometimes over-zealous—champion of their cause from their councils upon a question which we are now told never was an issue, was purely academic. That was a little unkind on the Socialist Party."

Mr. Amery's last reference was to the fact that the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress had always unflinchingly faced the real nature and consequences of the obligation to apply sanctions to an aggressor, and had forced Mr. Lansbury, because of his pacifist views, to resign from the leadership, and Sir Stafford Cripps, because he was so convinced of the Government's bad faith about sanctions that he did not wish the Labour Party to support them, to leave the Executive.

On May 22nd, 1935, Mr. Attlee told the House of Commons that—

"As a Party, we do not stand for unilateral disarmament . . . we stand for collective security through the League of Nations.

... In our programme, which was adopted at the Southport Conference, we said: 'We recognise that there may be circumstances in which the Government of Great Britain might have to use its military and naval forces in support of the League in restraining an aggressor nation which declined to submit to the authority of the League.'

In September, 1935, the Trades Union Congress at Margate and the Labour Party Conference at Brighton promised the Government the fullest support in the application of sanctions even if sanctions led to an attack by the aggressor and so to war. The only result was that the Conservative Party tried to make electoral capital out of accusing the Labour Party of wanting war with Italy, whereas, the argument ran, the Conservatives would apply only such sanctions as did not lead to war.

What this meant in practice became clear when the question of applying an oil embargo to Italy came up for discussion at Geneva. The United States intimated that if the League applied an embargo American public opinion would support the Administration in preventing American oil exporters from breaking the League embargo. Italy had no oil and the experts who were asked by the League to draft a report on the subject gave it as their opinion that if an effective embargo were applied Mussolini would not have oil enough to enable him to continue to make war, even against Abyssinia alone, for more than three months.

The oil embargo was not applied; instead, the National Government took the initiative in trying to avoid the necessity for any drastic measures by putting over the Hoare-Laval deal. In defending this policy before the House of Commons on December 19th, Sir Samuel Hoare explained that—

"About a fortnight ago it was clear that a new situation was about to be created by the question of the oil embargo. It seemed clear that, supposing an oil embargo were to be imposed and that the non-member States took an effective part in it, the oil embargo might have such an effect upon the hostilities as to force their termination. Just because of the effectiveness of the oil sanctions, provided that the non-member States had a full part in it, the situation immediately became more dangerous from the point of view of Italian resistance. From all sides we received reports that no responsible Government could disregard that Italy would regard the oil embargo as a military sanction or act involving war against them."

In the same debate, Lord Winterton, after first renewing the election gibe at the Labour Party of being warmongers¹ because they had said that a loyal and effective application of economic means of coercion ("sanctions") involved the risk of an attack by the aggressor, and that it was the country's duty under the Covenant to take that risk and to fight the aggressor if necessary, declared that—

"Hon. Members opposite may laugh at us, the real Conservative Party, for our views. But if we thought that that was the real meaning of the Government's policy, which we do not, we would break up the National Government to-morrow."

(That was true. And yet to-day these same Tories have the brazen impudence to talk as though Labour, and not they themselves, were pacifists between the wars.)

In his view, said the noble Lord, the Government's sanctions policy consisted of bringing "every reasonable pressure to bear upon the aggressor," while never taking "action which would lead to military resistance by Italy. For instance, if the imposition of oil sanctions led to armed resistance by Italy, it would not be in accord with the Government's pledge."

In short, as regards economic sanctions the Government's policy was to apply only such measures as Mussolini would allow them to apply without threatening war. This was in effect to make Mussolini Chairman of the League Committee for Co-ordinating Sanctions against Italy.

In the first days of the Committee for Co-ordinating Sanctions at Geneva, Mr. Eden took the lead. To his eternal honour and to the deep damnation of the Government, be it said that in doing so he exceeded his instructions. But he subsided after

¹ The Tory gibe at the Labour Party of being "warmongers" each time Labour urged the Government to stop drifting to world war by appeasing the aggressors went on year in and year out. It was the invariable and stock charge hurled at the heads of the very people whom the same Tories are to-day trying to make out were pacifists between the wars. On one occasion (June 25th, 1937) Mr. Attlee was goaded into making a reply that is worth quoting to-day:

"Whenever we suggest they should stand by the League the answer is: 'Oh, you want war.' I heard the murmur from those benches to-day. The Government have never stood by anything, and what has been the result?"

"Hon. Members: 'Peace.'"

"Mr. Attlee: If I may say so without wishing to be personally offensive, that is the kind of remark that the Gadarene swine might have made to each other just before they fell into the sea."

receiving fresh peremptory instructions to go as far as anyone else was willing to go, but in no circumstances to give a lead or take the initiative. And so the world witnessed the curious spectacle of Great Britain, which commanded all the levers of power in the Mediterranean (Gibraltar, Suez, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, a huge fleet, etc.), and had more influence over and means of putting pressure on Italy than the rest of the League put together, refusing to give a lead to the small States in applying the Covenant to preserve Abyssinia's territorial integrity and political independence against Italian aggression. The situation was made even more puzzling to the rest of the world by the fact that in the first few weeks Britain, as represented by Mr. Eden, really did give a lead, and that at all times the British Government never hesitated to give a lead in appeasement—that is, in joining with Mussolini and Laval in trying to apply the 1906 Treaty for partitioning Abyssinia.

The Government's Naval Pacifism

Even as late as December, 1935, the British Fleet in the Mediterranean were mobilised, and Great Britain asked various Mediterranean countries whether their navies would stand by the British Navy in case of an Italian attack. The assurances requested were given promptly by France, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Yugoslavia went further and offered to go to war with Italy the moment it were decided to oppose that country's aggression by collective force.

At this point it is necessary to dwell on the attitude of France as represented by M. Laval. Laval's policy was to appease both Italy and Great Britain and to avoid offending either if he could; but if he had to choose then to come down on the side of the stronger, that is on our side. Moreover, Laval was in a weak position at home. If he resisted any urgent British solicitation, he was in imminent danger of being overthrown by a coalition of the Left and the Centre led by M. Herriot. The only arguments that enabled him to survive were that (a) the British Government was not in earnest, anyway, about sanctions, and (b) if the French were asked to take the risk of applying sanctions for the sake of Abyssinia, Great Britain should agree to accepting collective security obligations that would cover France's allies (including the Soviet Union) in eastern Europe.

If the British Government at the time had consented to take part in an East European Locarno or a European Protocol, or any other form of mutual assistance system based on the

Covenant and pledging us to resist aggression against Czechoslovakia or Poland or the U.S.S.R., or any other State joining the security *bloc* in that area of the world, there is no shadow of a doubt that the French Chamber and public opinion would have produced a French Government willing to go with us 100 per cent. against Mussolini. Incidentally, of course, we should almost certainly have prevented the Second World War and would to-day be living uninterruptedly at peace since 1918.

But nothing was further from the Government's thought. Until it was too late, they remained bitterly opposed to any alliance with the Soviet Union or any guarantees against aggression to Hitler's East European neighbours. Their policy was to sacrifice the East European States as and when necessary to appease Hitler, not without the hope that he might find himself eventually embroiled with the U.S.S.R.

Laval stayed in power and was able to pursue his policy of appeasing Mussolini because he had read British policy correctly—and found it not fundamentally different from his own.

It is unnecessary to speculate on whether the Government were in earnest when they mobilised the Fleet in the Mediterranean, for on June 23rd, 1936, Sir John Simon told the House of Commons:

"I say quite bluntly that the Government is not prepared to invite this country to engage itself by force in that quarrel. Very ridiculous things have been said in that connection by some critics. It has been implied with a sneer, 'Are you afraid? Do you think the British Navy would be overwhelmed?' I have no doubt the British Navy would give a good account of itself, but that is not the point. The point is that with the present situation in Europe and the great dangers surrounding us here at home I am not prepared to see a single ship sunk even in a successful naval battle in the cause of Abyssinian independence."

Clearly, therefore, the mobilisation of the Fleet was pure bluff and did not mean that the Government had the slightest intention of incurring any risk of war to stop Mussolini's aggression.

The Government's Professions v. Their Policy

To measure the distance between this, the real policy of the Government, and the policy on which the Tory majority in the present Parliament were returned by the electorate, it is necessary to glance at one or two of the statements of Mr. Chamberlain

during the General Election. Mr. Chamberlain, who early in June, 1936, denounced the application of sanctions against Italy as midsummer madness, bade the small States abandon any hope of getting British help if they got into trouble, and preached a return to the classic precepts of international anarchy and power politics, told the people of this country in his election campaign that—

“The choice before us is whether we shall make a last effort at Geneva for peace and security, or whether by a cowardly surrender we shall break all the promises we have made and hold ourselves up to the shame of our children and their children’s children. . . .”

On October 14th, 1935, in a speech at Glasgow, he said it was a delusion to believe that we could “rest safely and comfortably in this little island of ours and let the rest of the world go down to chaos and ruin.”

There had never been such unanimity in all parts of the British Empire and such support and sympathy in the United States as well as in the fifty nations meeting at Geneva as there was for the policy of applying sanctions to stop Italian aggression.

“This astonishing demonstration of agreement had come about because of the realisation that there were fundamental issues at stake, that the old system of alliances and balance of power had gone, and in its place the League was the only instrument to which we could look to give us security against war. . . . If the League were enabled sufficiently to exert its authority to limit or shorten the struggle in Africa, it would inspire such new respect that its powers of preserving peace would be multiplied indefinitely. . . . If the League were to abdicate its functions under the Covenant, every weak nation would first begin to arm, then to seek alliance with its strongest neighbour, and before long the peace of Europe would be at the mercy of the biggest and strongest Powers in Europe.”

There is small doubt about it that Mr. Lloyd George was right when he declared that—

“The fact of the matter is, I am sorry to say, that there is no evidence that the Government ever meant business over sanctions. Sanctions were adopted immediately after the Government had decided to have an election.”

At the very moment when the Government were publicly supposed to be starting the job at Geneva of organising the collective defence of Abyssinia against Italian aggression, the Government made a further secret attempt to strike a bargain with Mussolini allowing him to help himself to most of Abyssinia.

In October, 1935, a leakage in the French Press compelled the Foreign Office to admit what they had first denied—namely, that their Mr. Peterson was in Paris discussing with his opposite number, M. St. Quentin of the Quai d'Orsay, certain fresh proposals for a settlement—which, needless to say, like their predecessors and successors, were based on the 1906 Treaty and designed to partition Abyssinia on terms satisfactory to Italy while safeguarding British and French “interests.”

The Hoare-Laval Deal

On November 2nd Sir Samuel Hoare told the Committee for Co-ordinating the Coercive Action (“sanctions”) that the League was at that time applying to Italy, the condemned aggressor, on behalf of Abyssinia, the recognised victim of aggression and loyal League member, that “it is essential to act in the spirit of impartial justice towards the three parties in the controversy—the League, Italy and Abyssinia. . . . Nothing is further from our minds than to make an agreement that is not acceptable to all three parties to the controversy.”

If a policeman reporting on a case said that he had found it essential to act in a spirit of impartial justice towards the three parties to the controversy—the magistrate, the burglar, and the householder whom the burglar was assaulting—he would be regarded as either crazy or a crook. The Tory National Government were not crazy.

In December another leakage in the French Press revealed the contents of the Hoare-Laval deal before Mussolini had time to accept it and in time for the Abyssinians to reject it, amidst a tempest of public indignation that forced the Baldwin Government, which had already accepted the Hoare-Laval plan and should in common honesty have taken the rap with its author, to throw Sir Samuel overboard (although with a lifeline attached for hauling him in again later). In France M. Laval, who was Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister, was subject to bitter attack, and saw his majority in the Chamber drop to twenty in the debate on his “deal.”

The Abyssinian Emperor, in a Note to the League of December 13th, 1935, accurately summed up the contents of the proposed "deal" as follows:

"Ethiopia, the victim of an act of aggression which has been formally recognised as such by the Council and by the Assembly, is invited—

"(1) to cede to its Italian aggressor in a more or less disguised form and under the pretext of a fallacious exchange of territories, about half of its national territory, in order to enable the aggressor country to settle part of its population there;

"(2) to agree that the League of Nations should confer upon its aggressor, in a disguised form, control over the other half of its territory pending future annexation."

But Sir Samuel Hoare was equally accurate when, in defending his proposals in the House on December 19th, he insisted that the deal merely applied the principles agreed upon in the Eden-Laval conversations in August, and in the Committee of Five's September proposals with their Anglo-French annexe. He added that—

"from all parts of the House we have heard demands for Italian colonial expansion." (Hon. Members: "No.") "Let me say, then, from more than one part of the House. I would also remind hon. Members that by various instruments, more particularly the 1906 Treaty as regards the French and ourselves, and the 1925 exchange of Notes between ourselves and Italy, we have recognised Italian economic interests over a much wider area of Abyssinia than that comprised in this southern zone, whilst only recently we have made it clear that so far as we ourselves are concerned we have no other economic interest in the country than those centred in the waters of Lake Tsana and the Blue Nile."

The Government's Real Policy

The real policy of the Government throughout was to do a deal with Mussolini on the basis of the 1906 Treaty. The evidence available makes it impossible to doubt Mr. E. H. Carr—who at the time of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute was still a high official of the Foreign Office and so was exceptionally well-informed about what actually happened—when he wrote in the January, 1937, number of the *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* that it was not the British Government's lack of arms, but their desire to win over Fascist Italy as an ally

against Germany, that accounted for their policy in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. Mr. Carr went on to deny that the Hoare-Laval deal was put forward in the belief that Italy would win. On the contrary:

"The British and French Governments, like almost everybody else, believed in December, 1935, that Italy was in an embarrassing military situation; and the famous 'plan' was designed to provide her with an honourable and profitable way out."

For months during the conflict the leaders and diplomatic correspondent articles in the Government Press that reflected the views of the Foreign Office Press Bureau had been expressing the view that Italy as "a factor for preserving order" in Central Europe would be gravely weakened if sanctions were pushed too far and the country became "a prey to chaos" as a consequence. It was argued that if allowed to help herself to Abyssinia, Italy would become a "satisfied" Power and would then join us and France in building up a balance of power against Hitler.

The only chance we had of preventing the world war and of being sure to win it if it came was through gathering around us a band of powerful and reliable allies and isolating the Fascist States. This we could do only on the basis of the Covenant. If the League had prevailed against Italy, rearmament might not have been necessary. Once the League had failed, rearmament could neither avert a world war nor guarantee us victory when it came.

But the Conservative Party, as has been shown in detail above, insisted always on treating the security obligations of the Covenant as scraps of paper, and accused those who wished to take them seriously of being "warmongers." That was because in each concrete case applying the Covenant would have meant coming down on the side either of people whose politics were red, like the Spanish Republicans, or whose skins were black, like the Abyssinians, or who were openly hostile to Western imperialism, like the Chinese. Ultimately it would have meant making an ally of the Soviet Union against the Fascist régimes, whom our Tories looked to to help them preserve the social order against the spread of Socialism.¹

And so our Tories preferred to destroy the collective system,

¹ Baron Aloisi, the Italian delegate, kept buttonholing our own and other delegates at Geneva, and explaining to them that Mussolini's régime was at stake and would fall if the other Powers got too tough with him. "You don't want Italy to go Red, do you?" was his conclusion.

revert to international anarchy and try to swindle the British people into supporting national rearmament on behalf of class-war power politics, although the combination could neither keep the peace nor guarantee victory in case of war.

The Italo-Abyssinian case has been described in some detail, for three reasons: it was the turning point for the League and collective security. Up till then the Covenant was still officially the basis of our foreign policy, and Geneva was the place where our Government did business with other Governments. After the failure of sanctions against Italy, even the pretence of basing British foreign policy on loyalty to the League was abandoned. Instead we had the slow murder of the Spanish Republic in the so-called Non-Intervention Committee in London and the quick slaughter of Czechoslovakia at Munich.

Secondly, as the faith of British public opinion in the idea of collective security had reached its peak over the Italo-Abyssinian crisis and an election was impending, the Tories had to go to astonishing lengths of duplicity and mendacity in order to cling to power by pretending to mean business with the defence of Abyssinia while at the same time getting away with their real policy of a dirty deal with Mussolini over the dismembered corpse of Abyssinia.

Finally, it was the issue on which the present majority in Parliament were returned to the House. The Tories in the House to-day, with Abyssinia, non-intervention, Munich and the world war around their necks, were voted into the House because they told the people of this country that they were going to save world peace by upholding the Covenant and defeating Mussolini's aggression. Most of these same Tories, or others like them, are going to appeal again to the electors to trust them to win the peace. What is more, they really mean it. They really believe they ought to be trusted.

"Honest" Mr. Baldwin was perfectly sincere in the House on December 19th, 1935, when he defended the Cabinet for first accepting the Hoare-Laval deal secretly, and then, a week later, when the horrid details became public and an unholy row began, rejecting the plan they had already adopted, and throwing Sam Hoare overboard. On that occasion "Honest" Mr. Baldwin was so rattled that he forgot to be tricky and spoke his inmost thoughts. He said two memorable things. First:

"I would like to make clear that never throughout that week had I or any one of my colleagues any idea in our minds that we were not being true to every pledge that we had given in the Election. (Hon. Members: 'Oh!')

If it had not been officially stated by the Prime Minister, it would be hard to believe that neither he nor any member of his Government had at any time realised that when doing a secret deal with the aggressor Mussolini to carve up and subjugate the victim of aggression, Abyssinia, they were not being true to their election pledges to uphold the treaty obligations of the Covenant, including the obligation in Article X to preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia against Italian aggression.

The second statement was even more startling. It struck hon. Members speechless, so that they could not even gasp, "Oh." If they muttered anything under their breaths, it was not the kind of thing *Hansard* records. Mr. (now Lord) Baldwin said:

"I was not expecting that deeper feeling which was manifested by many of my Hon. Friends and friends in many parts of the country on what I may call the ground of conscience and of honour."

If the Prime Minister and his colleagues had been private persons, and had dealt with the obligations of a contract and other sworn undertakings as they had with the treaty obligations of the Covenant and with their election pledges, they could hardly have escaped sentences for penal servitude as confidence tricksters, swindlers and perjurers. And yet we have the Prime Minister's word for it that he was sublimely unconscious of having done anything to offend the strictest canons of propriety, and he was genuinely startled when the news of the Hoare-Laval deal provoked a storm of protest from a public opinion outraged in its sense of justice. The Prime Minister's political sense of conscience and honour was evidently so entirely different from that of ordinary people that there was not only no connection between the two, but no means of communication. And yet Lord Baldwin had in those days earned a reputation for rugged, outstanding and exceptional honesty, and was returned to power largely on the plea, "Trust me."

But it is only fair to the National Tory Government of those days, and necessary to an understanding of why any National Tory Government of to-morrow would display the same peculiar sense of conscience and of honour in similar circumstances, to emphasise that the Prime Minister was utterly sincere in his two amazing statements, and really spoke, as he claimed, not only for himself, but for all his colleagues in the Government—and, it may be added, for the majority supporting him in the House. Why? Because the Tory Party really do identify the interest of their own class in preserving the capitalist social order

with the national interest. They passionately believe that when they defend capitalism they are saving the country. That is why they identify a Government run by the Tory Party with "national government" and acceptance of Tory policies with "maintaining national unity," "cutting out party politics," being "non-controversial" and "non-political." That is why, too, they confuse righteousness with self-righteousness, and take a pragmatic view of conscience and honour—anything they can get away with is right, and when they can't get away with something they want, they are unfortunate, not wrong, martyrs, not crooks.

The Conservative Party are still all-in defenders of the capitalist economic system. They still identify its preservation with saving this country and civilisation from chaos and barbarism. But after this war it will be an even more hopeless and dangerous enterprise to try to shore up the tottering old order than it turned out to be last time. If the Conservative Party are in power during the crucial years of reconstruction, there is grave danger lest this war too will have been fought in vain, and the children of those who have fought, and the grandchildren of the generation that fought the first world war, may have to endure a third and almost unimaginable ordeal.

CHAPTER VII

SLOW MURDER OF THE SPANISH REPUBLIC

"Non-intervention"

THE NEXT STEP IN THE rake's progress of Conservative foreign policy between the wars was the case of Spain. A Popular Front coalition, composed of Liberals and Socialists and supported by the Communists (although there was not a single Communist in the Government, and the Communist Party in Spain at that time was weak), had won the General Election. They had carried out some mild social reforms and were preparing a moderate Bill to tackle the land question and the desperate condition of the Spanish peasantry. There was a remote danger that the half-feudal social order of Spain might be partially modernised through a series of reforms.

This was looked upon as a threat to their interests by the landowning nobility in Spain, the owners of vast estates, as well as by the handful of big business men who ran the economic life of the country. They were supported by the higher reaches of

the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, which is the greatest land-owner in Spain and has big business interests second to none in that country. As early as 1934 there were contacts between reactionary Spanish officers and Mussolini, and arrangements were concluded for the supply of arms and money.

General Franco broke his oath to the Republic and started the Fascist revolt in Spanish Morocco in July, 1936, receiving from the outset a contingent of Italian aeroplanes. From then on Italian and later German money, troops, tanks, guns, planes, machine guns, rifles, ammunition and stores and supplies of all kinds were poured into Franco Spain in an ever-increasing flood. Towards the end of the struggle there were 100,000 Italian and German troops in Spain.

The endeavour of the Spanish Government was to have the matter dealt with at Geneva on the basis of Article X of the Covenant, by which the members of the League were pledged to respect and to preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of Spain. The Spanish Government pointed out that under international law any assistance given to the rebels constituted aggression against the Spanish Republic, whereas under international law the Government of Spain had a perfect right to buy arms and munitions abroad in order to help it restore law and order in its own territory.

There was a Popular Front Government in France, which, although weak, was sympathetic to the Spanish Republic, and wished to supply it with arms. At this the National Government, which from the outset had made up its mind that whatever happened the Spanish Republicans should not be allowed to win lest Spain go Socialist, went into action. On or about August 1st, 1936, it clearly intimated to the French Government that it would oppose any attempt to deal with the matter at Geneva, that it was in favour of "Non-intervention," by which it meant denying the Spanish Government the right to buy arms abroad while turning a blind eye to the help being given by the Fascist Powers to the rebels, and that if, as a result of her "competition" with Italy and Germany in sending arms to Spain, France were attacked by the Fascist countries, Britain would not consider the attack an unprovoked one and the Locarno guarantee would not come into operation.

The right wing of the French Popular Front, comprising a majority of the so-called Radical Socialists (going all the way from out-and-out opportunists and appeasers like Georges Bonnet and Chautemps to near Socialists and pro-Spanish Republicans like Pierre Cot) said they would resign rather than

part company with the British Government on this issue and leave France isolated and unprotected against the combined Fascist Powers and the threat of riots by the French Fascist leagues and a large section of the French Right, who, like the Fascist States themselves, were encouraged to indulge in threats by the British Government's attitude.

"Non-intervention" was adopted, nominally on the initiative of the unhappy French Government, actually at British instigation as a result of the threat of the Fascist Powers that unless the democracies deprived the Spanish Government of its right to buy arms and munitions, the Fascists would supply the rebels in violation of international law. Afterwards, of course, they went on supplying the rebels, anyway, whereas the democracies starved the Spanish Government of arms and so passively co-operated with Fascist aggression. The Soviet Union, to her eternal honour, broke away from the ignoble farce of "Non-intervention" after a vain fight in the Non-intervention Committee in London to instil a little honesty into the proceedings of that body, and for some time supplied the Spanish Government with arms, planes and advisers, although in relatively small quantities.

It was British influence that successfully kept the matter out of the hands of the League, rightly fearing that any serious attempt to deal with the situation on the basis of the Covenant would have ended either in showing up the National Government as the conscious accomplice of Fascist aggression against Spain, or in pledging it together with France, the U.S.S.R. and other loyal League members to supply the Spanish Government with arms as the least they could do in fulfilment of their duty under Article X of the Covenant.

That this was no idle fear was shown by the results of the even very limited contacts with the League which were all the strenuous efforts of the Spanish Government could achieve in the teeth of British opposition: in December, 1936, the National Government, in face of an aroused public opinion at home and the atmosphere at Geneva, felt constrained to accept a League Council resolution which declared that the situation in Spain constituted a violation of Article X of the Covenant. In September, 1937, the National Government could not refuse to vote in the Assembly for a resolution which not only repeated this declaration, but said there were veritable foreign army corps in Spain, and unless there was an immediate and complete withdrawal of foreign combatants, Non-intervention should "in the near future" be abandoned. In January, 1938, after Hitler and Mussolini had gone on pouring tanks, planes, men and

munitions into Spain, the Spanish Foreign Minister drafted a resolution which reproduced the text of the Assembly resolution of September, 1937, and invited the Council to vote for acting upon it. Lord Halifax voted "No," thus vetoing the resolution and making it perfectly clear that "Non-intervention" meant acting as the accomplice of the Fascist aggressors.

The Government's False Pacifism

Peace at almost any price was as usual the reason alleged by the National Government for its policy. It was freely asserted that Italy and Germany would go to war with France and Great Britain and the Soviet Union and the Little Entente, if they were not allowed to supply arms to the Spanish rebels. Those who were against Non-intervention were accused of being warmongers.

As usual, the pacifist pose meant merely that this was not a cause for which the National Government felt it worth while taking any risk of war, however slight, because its sympathies were in fact engaged on the other side.

Republican Spain would have acted on the offer made in February, 1937, by Alvarez del Vayo, the Republican Foreign Minister, to become an ally of France and Great Britain, in return for the abandonment of so-called "Non-intervention," by putting Spanish air and sea bases, roads and railways at the disposal of the air forces, navies and armies of the two Powers in case of war.

It is difficult to doubt that if Fascist aggression in Spain had been checked by joint Anglo-French-Soviet action, this would have led to an Anglo-French-Spanish alliance in the West and to the consolidation of the partnership between the Western Allies on the one hand and France's allies in east Europe on the other—namely, the U.S.S.R., Poland and the Little Entente—leading probably to a revival of the "Eastern Locarno" project attempted by Barthou in 1937. That would have closed the path of aggression to Hitler.

Indeed, on this as on so many occasions it is difficult to see how the British Government could have failed to succeed in reviving the collective security system and in preventing the next world war, if it had tried honestly and courageously to fulfil its treaty obligations under the Covenant. But the price for acting in this way would have been the loosening of the foundations of capitalism and the encouragement of the forces of the Left throughout the Continent, diminishing the influence of the Fascist régimes as a bulwark against "Communism," and

ultimately making it more difficult for the Tories in this country to retain power and to preserve the old social and imperial order.

These things were not, of course, calculated and reasoned out to their uttermost consequences. It was a matter of acting on class instinct. As usual, the Conservative Party's view of national interest was biased by instinctive fear and hatred of the forces of the Left and the Soviet Union, and by an affection for that gallant Christian gentleman, Franco, and his backers in Berlin and Rome, too robust to be put off by the atrocities committed by his Moors, the bombing of Guernica and the horrors and immeasurable suffering inflicted upon the Spanish people by Fascist intervention.

The Pretence of not Taking Sides

As always, "Non-intervention" was justified on the ground that it meant not taking sides—just as the Tory-run Coalition at the end of the last war backed the Whites against the Reds for three years in Russia, while stoutly maintaining throughout that there was no question of taking sides in Russian internal affairs. Appeasement of Fascist aggressors was also conducted throughout in the name of impartiality and not taking sides in the conflict, whereas in fact it consisted in flouting our treaty obligations in the attempt to bring off a raw deal with the aggressor at the expense of his victim.

"Non-intervention," which in fact meant co-operating with Fascist intervention against the Spanish Republic by depriving the Spanish Government of its rights under international law and disregarding our duty under the Covenant, was also conducted throughout on the pretence of impartiality. The phrase "not taking sides in the ideological conflict" was used *ad nauseam*.

The true nature of Non-intervention was, however, revealed by Lord Halifax in the House of Lords on November 3rd, 1938, when he said:

"Signor Mussolini has always made it plain from the time of the first conversation between His Majesty's Government and the Italian Government that, for reasons known to us all—whether we approve of them or not—he was not prepared to see General Franco defeated. He has always made it plain, on the other hand, that he would assist, as he has been assisting, the work of the Non-intervention Committee."

The National Government found it easy to co-operate with Signor Mussolini on this basis in assisting the work of the Non-intervention Committee, because for reasons known to us all—

whether we approve of them or not—they were not prepared to see the Spanish Government win.

The pretence of impartiality was, indeed, transparently thin. For instance, in the first weeks of the war, when the Spanish Government had command of the sea, it attempted to stop British tankers carrying oil to the rebels. Although it was acting within its rights in international law in doing so, it was immediately threatened with British naval action to make it cease this "unwarranted interference" with British shipping. But when the rebels established a blockade of Bilbao, the Government not only recognised it, but urged British shipping to respect it and to avoid Bilbao, although the rebels had no right to declare a blockade under international law (since Franco had not been granted belligerent rights), and although in point of fact they had been unable to establish an effective blockade.

When the Spanish Government sank a rebel cruiser, the British Navy promptly rescued the crew and handed them back to the Spanish rebel navy. But when the National Government were entreated to use the Navy to rescue women and children and drowning refugees fleeing from Bilbao and Gijon in face of the Fascist advance, Mr. Duff Cooper, after comparing Fascist mass murders in these towns with the slaughter of cattle in the Chicago stockyards, as an unpleasant but necessary operation with which outsiders would not be justified in interfering, argued that to rescue women and children would be taking sides in the conflict. His words, spoken in the House on July 22nd, 1937, are worth quoting:

"We wish to maintain, so far as possible, the attitude in which we shall be held to assist militarily neither one side nor the other. It is difficult to draw the line between humanitarianism and military assistance. It is very easy, on the other hand, to make high-sounding speeches about the suffering that is going on in Spain, but everybody who studies the problem knows that it is not caused principally upon combatants but nearly always more on non-combatants, on the women and children. It is very easy to say that humanitarianism demands that we should feed women and children who are suffering, but when a town is beleaguered, besieged, help given to a beleaguered garrison either in the way of importing food or in the way of diminishing the demand for food—and that is taking away the women and children—is military assistance."¹

¹ In this war the Allies were humane enough to arrange for the evacuation of French women and children from St. Nazaire, although they thereby "helped" the beleaguered Nazi garrison.

And so the Navy was ordered to stay outside the three-mile limit and watch the women and children trying to reach our ships drown or be butchered. When Franco seized and detained British ships for weeks and months, he was only sent polite notes. When he bombed British ships and murdered British sailors, Mr. Duff Cooper made excuses for him in the House and forgot to express even conventional regret for the loss of British lives, while Mr. Chamberlain went ardently pacifist. As for the murdered seamen, they were chivalrously accused of being "war-profiteers," running Franco's blockade with food for the Spanish people for money and therefore unworthy of sympathy or protection.

When the indignation over the bombing of British ships rose to dangerous heights, Mr. Chamberlain calmed it by giving assurances he must have known were false. He said there would be an investigation, and that Franco had promised compensation for the ships if the investigation proved they had been sunk by his airmen. But in point of fact Franco had never promised any compensation. Moreover, the investigation privately agreed upon by the Government with Franco had been planned on lines that the shipowners regarded as so scandalous that they refused to accept it and denounced it publicly, thus bringing into the light of day what the Government had attempted to keep secret: it was proposed to hold the enquiry on Franco territory, excluding witnesses from Spanish Government territory where the bombings had mostly taken place, and also refusing the right to the shipowners' representative or the crews of the bombed ships to appear to give evidence. It is difficult in the circumstances to doubt that the Government were forced to promise an enquiry by public indignation but had in fact planned with Franco to conduct it on lines that would whitewash the gallant Christian gentleman's destruction of British lives and property.

In his letter to the Duchess of Atholl published April 29th, 1938, Mr. Chamberlain inadvertently admitted that he had known of the presence of regular Italian troops in Spain since the beginning of the war. Mr. Eden made the same confession when virtually compelled by Mr. Chamberlain to resign a little later as a further sacrifice on the altar of appeasing Mussolini. And yet Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Halifax, and Mr. Eden had for months been getting up in the House, and stoutly denying that they knew anything of the sending of Italian troops to Spain.

The Government's Real Motives

Class hatred determined the Government's resolve that the Spanish Government should in no circumstances be allowed to win the war. Mr. Winston Churchill, in articles in the *Evening Standard* appearing in August and September, 1936, drew the logical conclusions from the prevailing Tory view with his usual incisive clarity. It was all nonsense, he declared, to talk about the Spanish Government standing for democratic principles and Franco being a rebel and a traitor. The Spanish Civil War was an open and direct outbreak of the class war. On the one side, Spanish workers fighting for Communism, and on the other, Spanish capitalists fighting for Fascism. One might have sympathies on one side or the other. But no question of legality could arise. For once the issue of property was at stake such abstractions as democracy and legality necessarily faded into the background.¹ Mr. Churchill then proclaimed himself the whole-hearted friend and supporter of Franco, on the ground that he preferred Fascism to Communism and that the Spanish Popular Front Government was a Kerenski Government, and would have been the victim of a Communist conspiracy if Franco had not forestalled it by his Fascist revolt.

"It is idle to claim that a Constitutional and Parliamentary Régime is legally or morally entitled to obedience of all classes when it is actually being subverted and devoured from day to day by Communism. A constitutional government to be worthy of the name must prove it is capable of preserving law and order and protecting life, freedom and property. If it fails to enforce these fundamental guarantees, no parliamentary system can endure" (*Evening Standard*, August 10th, 1936).

¹ Cf. also his comment when the "gallant Christian gentleman" unleashed his heathen and barbarian Moors on his fellow countrymen:

"Foreign opinion has been shocked by the employment of Moorish soldiers in Spain. But the issue is now one of pure, ruthless, lethal force, and questions of sentiment do not count for much between mortal foes in desperation. Bayonets and bullets are the arbiters" (*Evening Standard*, August 21st, 1936).

Cf. too the *Morning Post* of October 10th, 1936, condemning the Labour Party's repudiation of the cynical farce of 'non-intervention': "All kinds of quibbles were raised about democracy, about the rights of Constitutional Governments, about the prescriptions of international law, in order to justify intervention by Great Britain in the Spanish Civil War." That is Toryism with the lid off!

But in addition to this social motive for letting loose the dogs of Fascist war on the Spanish Republic, on which the Conservative Party was unanimous, the balance-of-power appeaser section of the party, led by Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden and fully supported by Lord (then Sir Robert) Vansittart and the Foreign Office, were still pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of detaching Fascist Italy from Nazi Germany, and of making Mussolini an ally against Hitler. This policy had been tried at the expense of Abyssinia and the Covenant and had resulted in the formation of the Axis. It was tried again, with the murder of Spanish democracy as the bargaining counter. For this purpose an Anglo-Italian so-called "gentlemen's agreement" concerning the Mediterranean was concluded, by which the two countries pledged themselves to respect the territorial integrity—but not the political independence, which was not mentioned—of Spain and Spanish possessions. This agreement was regarded in Foreign Office circles and by the Press they inspired as implying opposition by Italy and Great Britain to the extension of German influence in Spain. It was publicly interpreted by Mussolini as giving him a free hand for intervention in Spain, and as meaning that the British Government would join with him in opposing "Soviet influence" in Spain, by which was meant the survival of the lawful Spanish Government.

Just as at the Stresa Conference an agreement on European policy was concluded with Mussolini that said nothing about Abyssinia, and Mussolini correctly interpreted silence to mean consent to the war he was even then openly preparing, so the silence of the Anglo-Italian "gentlemen's agreement" about Mussolini's intervention in Spain was taken by him to mean the "All clear" for going all out in destroying the Spanish Republic and enthroning Franco.

He was, of course, right. But he did the job with German help and not alone, and the nearer he came to victory, the more openly he boasted that the British Empire was doomed and ripe for carving up by the Axis. This was not what the Foreign Office school of Toryism had bargained for.

At the same time it became clear that a second hope of the balance-of-power appeasers was going to be falsified. In the case of China, of Abyssinia and of Spain alike, the Foreign Office belief in the balance of power had also taken the form that somehow each of these conflicts would end in a deadlock or partial victory only for the aggressor, giving Great Britain an opportunity to act as mediator and impose a compromise satisfactory to British interests.

The balance-of-power appeasers, whose view of national interests coincided with that of the Foreign Office, did not really want Japan to win hands down in China, but only to go far enough to teach Chinese nationalism a lesson—on terms extending Japanese imperialism in China no doubt, but also securing respect for British imperialism by a bargain with Japan.¹ They did not want Mussolini to conquer the whole of Abyssinia, but manœuvred for a deadlock that would make a Hoare-Laval deal acceptable all round. Finally, they dreamed of a compromise in Spain resulting in the restoration of the Spanish monarchy.

Morality was, of course, non-existent in these hopes and dreams, just as it did not figure in the balance-of-power calculations about Anglo-Japanese and Anglo-Italian deals, for they relied upon the indefinite prolongation of bloodshed and ruin to create the conditions in which they might be realised.

In Spain both the hope of enlisting Mussolini as an ally and of restoring a Spanish monarchy that would be friendly to British Toryism were falsified.² Mussolini stuck to Hitler, and both succeeded in putting Franco into power on condition he stuck to them. It was at this point that a rift appeared in the Conservative Party and the upper reaches of the propertied classes on the issue of foreign policy: Spain is of first-class importance as a strategic centre in the defence of the Empire. A Spain on the side of the Axis would have been extremely serious to British imperial defence. Even a Spain whose neutrality was unfriendly and unreliable would be a danger.

It was this consideration that turned Mr. Churchill against Franco and for the Spanish Government, although in an uncertain and half-hearted fashion, toward the end of the conflict. Lord Vansittart experienced a similar deathbed semi-conversion on balance-of-power grounds. Mr. Eden had ever since Abyssinia been sceptical of Mussolini's good intentions and in favour of co-operation with the U.S.S.R.

From the middle of 1937 on, the balance-of-power section of the Conservative Party and the Foreign Office, led by Mr.

¹ There was also an anti-Soviet motive in Conservative Far Eastern policy. Cf. H. Th. de Booy, an acute and well-informed Dutch observer, in *Pacific Affairs*, March, 1935: "While Japan is undermining the Western nations economically, it protects them politically against the spread of Communism. The *status quo*, in which the Western Powers are so vitally interested, is, in the ultimate analysis, a balance between Communist expansion on the continent of Asia and the economic imperialism of Japan."

² But the F.O., Mr. Churchill, Mr. Eden and their followers are still backing the monarchist horse in Spain.

Churchill and Mr. Eden, were on the whole, with varying degrees of intensity, in favour of an alliance with the Soviet Union and France to stop further Fascist aggressions. They were willing, as that appeared to be the most convenient method, to conclude the alliance within the framework of the Covenant, so as to make a reality of the League of Nations and collective security.

The revival of collective security and safeguarding of peace through an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance based on the Covenant had been Labour's official policy since 1934, as shown above.

Balance-of-Power Appeasers v. All-in Appeasers

Finally, the ratification by Mr. Chamberlain of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, in violation of his pledge that its bringing into force must depend on a "settlement" in Spain, brought matters to a head. Mussolini intimated that he could not have sufficient confidence in the British Government's intentions so long as Mr. Eden remained Foreign Secretary. Mr. Chamberlain passed this on to Mr. Eden with what amounted to a request that he resign in order to facilitate Mr. Chamberlain's pursuit of peace. Mr. Eden did resign, but remained in the Conservative Party and kept his opposition to the Government's policy within limits so discreet as to make it wholly ineffective and for the most part invisible.

After that the all-in appeasers under Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Horace Wilson took charge, and the Foreign Office, or balance-of-power appeasers, took a back seat. Whereas the latter wanted to buy Mussolini out of the Axis, the former wanted to buy Great Britain into the Axis and tacitly to acknowledge the world leadership in capitalist reaction of the Fascist Powers.

But it must be clearly realised and constantly remembered that the all-in appeasers differed only in degree and method and not in principle or purpose from the balance-of-power appeasers. Both were concerned primarily with defending the power and privileges of the ruling class to which they belonged and whose interest in preserving the social *status quo* at home and the imperial *status quo* abroad they quite sincerely identified with the "honour and vital interests" of the country. Both believed that some sacrifices and concessions might be necessary to achieve this major end, and both looked primarily to bargains with Fascist aggressors at the expense of third parties and in disregard of the collective system, as the appropriate method.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUPREME BETRAYAL

Background to Munich

EVEN THE ALL-IN APPEASERS tried to keep Germany off the British Empire and out of Western Europe in return for leaving Hitler a free hand in the East, not without the sneaking hope that he might use it to engage in a conflict with the Soviet Union that might destroy them both and leave England as the dominant Power.

This was in fact a different application of the balance-of-power doctrine rather than a conscious abandonment of it, although it took even greater liberties with the facts and incurred even heavier risks than the more orthodox balance-of-power appeaser school. It is therefore not surprising that the two schools of thought were not clearly differentiated in the Conservative camp before 1937, when appeasement had gone very far; that prominent Conservative politicians have been Chamberlainites and Vansittartites in turn, according to circumstances; that, as late as 1942, after the Soviet Union had become our ally, Lord Moore-Brabazon, then a Cabinet Minister, and who, like all the former appeasers, had turned into a wartime Vansittartite, created a scandal by semi-publicly uttering the hope that Hitler's Germany and the U.S.S.R. would destroy each other, leaving Great Britain the dominant Power on the Continent; and that the first clear expression in the House of the all-in appeaser doctrine came from a source regarded as close to the Foreign Office.

On May 2nd, 1935, Mr. Duncan Sandys, Mr. Winston Churchill's son-in-law, then a young man of twenty-seven, fresh from the Foreign Office and in particular from his post in the Berlin Embassy under Sir Neville Henderson, made a speech which created quite a stir and was hailed as an expression of the advanced thought of the post-war generation. It was in fact an expression of the thought in those days of the appeasers in general and the Foreign Office in particular.

He began by condemning the Versailles Treaty and the whole idea of maintaining the *status quo* by force and demanding free negotiations with [Hitler] Germany, on the basis of equality, for an agreed settlement:

"It would naturally follow that we would have to recognise to Germany and also to the other ex-enemy States complete rights of sovereignty, such as we enjoy ourselves, including also the freedom to rearm. Quite apart from the fact that Germany has already taken the law into her own hands, I do not consider that the repeal of the disarmament dispositions of the various peace treaties would in actual fact lead to an increase in arms. On the contrary, I believe that the announcement of the German rearmament programme brings new hope of a general limitation of arms by all countries."

Not content with this somewhat rash excursion into prophecy—which has been cynically described as a gratuitous form of error (a description which was certainly accurate in this case)—Mr. Sandys went on to propose a policy for combining the loftiest morality with exclusive devotion to British interests, as understood by the Conservative Party and the Foreign Office:

"It is not our business to be pro-German or pro-French—it is our business to be pro-British. . . . In the course of the Berlin conversations, the German Chancellor informed our Ministers that Germany would not return to Geneva unless all imputations as to her unworthiness to administer her colonial mandates were removed. As long as this is purely a matter of honour, surely a concession of this kind would be in accordance with that spirit of conciliation which we are trying to promote.

"At the same time, Germany should be clearly asked, once her honour is satisfied, to make a categorical declaration utterly renouncing all actual territorial claims and ambitions in the colonial field. This is the one and only question which is of direct and vital interest to Great Britain and to the British Empire. If Germany once again becomes a colonial Power, not only will her interests clash with ours in that field, but she will also inevitably be drawn into rivalry with us as a naval Power. Surely, then, it is the first elementary duty of British statesmanship to see to it that the great energies, ambitions and enthusiasms of the new Germany are directed into channels where they will not clash with the essential interests of Great Britain. Therefore, I cannot too strongly urge His Majesty's Government, in directing our foreign policy, to lend a sympathetic ear to Germany's legitimate claims and aspirations in every field, provided that they can obtain real satisfaction on what to us is the vital issue—namely, the colonial and naval question."

This idea of turning Hitler's Germany eastwards in order to keep her out of her former colonies (except morally) which we had 'won' was, it will be observed, a natural development of the post-Peace Conference policy of giving a free hand, for class reasons, to the Stahlhelm, Hitler and other armed bands of enemies of peace and of the Weimar Republic. It carried further the idea which underlay the Locarno treaties and was referred to in the extract from Lord D'Abernon's diary quoted above. It was also in line with the anxiety expressed by Lord Londonderry, Sir Arthur Balfour and Mr. Lloyd George in 1933 and 1934 lest the Nazi régime, then weak, because Germany was disarmed, should be treated so harshly by the Western Powers or the Little Entente or the Soviet Union as to lead to its overthrow by the German people and hence to the spread of "Communism."

Malice Aforethought

This is the general background to the crowning betrayal of Munich. Apologists for that event generally start with the actual outbreak of the crisis, and argue that Mr. Chamberlain, taken by surprise, had done the best he could in difficult circumstances, when the French were letting him down. Their second line of defence is that Mr. Chamberlain was gaining time for rearmament, as we were too weak to fight in 1938.

In point of fact, the betrayal of Czechoslovakia was a matter of deliberate policy planned and decided upon long beforehand. It was foreseen by Lord Londonderry in March, 1933, as shown by his letter quoted above, as one of the consequences of appeasing Hitler and letting him rearm. It must be assumed that the noble Lord's foresight was shared by his colleagues in the Cabinet who were mainly responsible for foreign policy. It was carried out with the same careful attention to deceiving public opinion and adopting the pose of impartiality and "not taking sides," and prompted by the same desire to curry favour with Hitler as a bulwark against Communism and to play him off against the Soviet Union, as the previous instalments of appeasement.

After the betrayal of Spain the Fascist Axis went rapidly from strength to strength and became more and more aggressive in tone.

Hitler Germany rearmed massively, marched into and fortified the Rhineland, invaded and annexed Austria, stirred up trouble among the German minority in Czechoslovakia, and started a diplomatic, Press and broadcasting campaign of

threats and lies about that country upon what had by then become familiar lines. Things came to a head in October, 1938.

But as early as March 24th—that is, a clear six months before Munich—Mr. Chamberlain made a speech in the House showing that the Government were fully aware of Hitler's threat to the territorial integrity and political independence of Czechoslovakia, and had already made up their mind to do nothing about it except to try to do a deal with Hitler. Mr. Chamberlain began by saying that "recent events in Austria" (i.e. Hitler's invasion) had created a new situation, which was raising in an acute form the international position and internal situation of Czechoslovakia, with special reference to the German minority. The Government had given special attention to this matter.

"In particular, they have fully considered the question whether the United Kingdom, in addition to those obligations by which it is already bound by the Covenant of the League and the Treaty of Locarno, should, as a further contribution towards preserving peace in Europe, now undertake new and specific commitments in Europe and in particular such a commitment in relation to Czechoslovakia. . . . Should we forthwith give an assurance to France that, in the event of her being called upon by reason of German aggression on Czechoslovakia to implement her obligation under the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty we would immediately employ our full military force on her behalf? Or alternatively, should we at once declare our readiness to take military action in resistance to any forcible interference with the independence and integrity of Czechoslovakia and invite any other nations which might so desire to associate themselves with us in such a declaration?"

Mr. Chamberlain rejected this policy on the ground that he wished the Government to preserve a free hand with regard to whether or not it should go to war to stop aggression anywhere in Europe, and therefore did not wish to be committed in advance to resist any aggression.

He then went on to define the Government's attitude to the Soviet proposal, which had been made some time previously, for a conference of all States loyal to the Covenant, to discuss how to meet the danger of aggression:

"It remains for His Majesty's Government to state their attitude in regard to the proposal made by the Government of the U.S.S.R. that an early conference should be held for

the purpose of discussion with certain other Powers of the practical measures which in their opinion the circumstances demand. . . . Their proposal would appear to involve less a consultation with a view to settlement than a concerting of action against an eventuality that has not yet arisen. Its object would appear to be to negotiate such mutual undertakings in advance to resist aggression as I have referred to, which for the reasons I have already given His Majesty's Government for their part are unwilling to accept."

Mr. Chamberlain made the further objection to the Soviet proposal that its indirect and inevitable consequence would be "to aggravate the tendency towards the establishment of exclusive groups of nations which must, in the view of His Majesty's Government, be inimical to the prospects of European Peace."

Mr. Chamberlain's own policy was expressed in the following words: "So far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, it seems to His Majesty's Government that now is the time when all the resources of diplomacy should be enlisted in the cause of peace. They have been glad to take note of and in no way underrate the definite assurances given by the German Government as to their attitude."

An offer to negotiate with Germany about the fate of Czechoslovakia, on the basis of accepting Hitler's assurances while refusing to recognise any obligation to assist Czechoslovakia, come what may, was clear notice that the raw-dealers had a free field again, in the sacred name of appeasement. The swelling chorus in the Government Press of attacks on Czechoslovakia, espousing the cause of the Sudeten German Nazis and questioning the little democratic Republic's right to exist, made it plain that the deal was going to be very raw indeed. It had to be, to satisfy Hitler. And Mr. Chamberlain was determined to appease Hitler to the last Czech.

The Plot Thickens

In May, 1938, Hitler menacingly concentrated troops on the Czechoslovak frontier. The Czechs let it be known that they were prepared to fight, countermobilised and received assurances from Daladier that in case of war France would fulfil her obligations under her treaty of alliance with Czechoslovakia. This would have brought into operation the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty, by which the U.S.S.R. undertook to come to the assistance of Czechoslovakia if France did so. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax found their hands forced, and intimated that, if

a Nazi attack on Czechoslovakia precipitated a general war involving France, this country could scarcely keep out.

Hitler called off his troop concentration and protested indignantly at the suspicion that he had ever meant to threaten anyone. Mr. Chamberlain set to work again to carry out his policy of selling Czechoslovakia to Hitler, and breaking up the Franco-Soviet and Franco-Czechoslovak alliances.

On May 10th, at a Cliveden House luncheon with American journalists, Mr. Chamberlain gave it as his personal opinion that Czechoslovakia in its present form could not survive, was an obstacle to peace, and should surrender the Sudeten Germans to Hitler. He also said that Communism should not be tolerated in Spain. This expression of opinion was regarded as so scandalous by the journalists who heard it that they let it leak through into the Press. It came to the ears of Hitler through the German Ambassador in London, Ribbentrop, who was on the friendliest and most intimate terms with out-and-out appeasers in and around the Government.

British pressure was used relentlessly and cumulatively on both Paris and Prague. The French were told—in an interview by Mr. Chamberlain with Daladier and his Foreign Secretary Georges Bonnet on the occasion of their visit to London—that it was better to let Hitler dominate central Europe without war than to risk Russian armed intervention in Europe. For if the Russians did intervene, one of two things was bound to happen: either the U.S.S.R. would be defeated, in which case Hitler would be aggrandised to a point directly menacing British and French interests; or else the Soviet Union would be victorious, and in that case half Europe would go Communist and Soviet influence and prestige in the world in general and Europe in particular would increase to a point where it threatened the social order.

Georges Bonnet, afterwards to become notorious as a collaborator and traitor, met Mr. Chamberlain more than halfway. Toward the end of the proceedings, the two were transacting business directly with each other, behind the backs of their Cabinets and Foreign Offices, and freely misrepresenting the attitude of their respective governments in order to give each other ammunition for convincing their colleagues that Czechoslovakia must be abandoned. Bonnet told Chamberlain the French would not fight. Chamberlain told Bonnet the British could not fight, and each reported the other's views to his Cabinet as a final reason for surrendering to Hitler. This aspect of the proceedings ended with what was virtually a joint ultimatum to Czechoslovakia, to surrender to Hitler on pain of

being abandoned to the tender mercies of the Nazi conquerors. Hitler co-operated by informing the Czechs that if he did not get his way he would bomb Prague to smithereens from the air.

This was accompanied by a series of visits by Mr. Chamberlain to Hitler and by the final conference between Chamberlain, Hitler, Mussolini and Daladier at Munich. At each visit Chamberlain gave away a bit more and Hitler raised his demands.

The Sell-out

The essentials of the surrender were agreed upon between Chamberlain and Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15th. The Anglo-French ultimatum to the Czechs was agreed upon by Daladier and Bonnet on September 18th when they came to London, and immediately despatched. The Czechoslovak Government capitulated on September 21st. Mr. Chamberlain went to Bad Godesberg on September 22nd to discuss the details of partition with Hitler, and was met by demands for the immediate occupation by German troops of the territories in question. The Nazi Press took the view that the only difference between Hitler's Berchtesgaden proposals, which Mr. Chamberlain had accepted, put over on the French and then imposed on Czechoslovakia, was a question of the procedure by which Hitler's demands should be satisfied. This indeed was the case, and Hitler's demands were conceded in full on September 28th at the Munich Conference, with Mussolini acting as "mediator."

There was, of course, at no time any real danger of war arising out of the difference between Hitler's (agreed) Berchtesgaden proposals of September 15th and the demands about which Mr. Chamberlain temporised at Bad Godesberg on September 22nd, but which he accepted at Munich on September 28th. On September 27th, indeed, Mr. Chamberlain broadcast a statement that Czechoslovakia was a little country we knew nothing about, and for whose sake he would never mobilise the whole British Empire, which would go to war only to resist a Power that had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear.

Bluff and Swindle

Nevertheless, the Government made a tremendous to-do during this period, and scared public opinion nearly out of its wits with the imminent danger of another world war: general orders were issued for all citizens to report for the fitting and issue of gas masks. London hospitals made arrangements to

move their patients to make room for air raid casualties. The B.B.C. gave instructions on how to avoid sudden death in air raids. Schoolchildren were standing by for evacuation. Trenches were dug in the parks, and thousands of men and women filled sandbags to protect our public buildings. The Navy was given orders to stand to.

All this created the atmosphere in which Mr. Chamberlain melodramatically received Hitler's invitation, in the midst of a debate in the House, flew off to Munich, sold Czechoslovakia, and came back fluttering a scrap of paper and shouting triumphantly: "Peace with honour!"

The first to expose the nature of these proceedings was Mr. Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty. He resigned from the Cabinet and made a speech in the House explaining, with all the authority of one who had been a defence Minister throughout the crisis, that the Government had never had any serious intention of standing up to Hitler and had never made any real preparations for that purpose. He also declared himself a convert to the balance-of-power or Vansittartite school in the Conservative camp in the following terms:

"It was not for Serbia or Belgium we fought in 1914, though it suited some people to say so, but we were fighting then as we should have been fighting last week in order that one Great Power should not be allowed, in disregard of treaty obligations and the laws of nations, and against all morality, to dominate by brutal force the continent of Europe. . . . Throughout these days, the Prime Minister has believed in addressing Herr Hitler through the language of sweet reason. I have believed he was more open to the language of the mailed fist."

The *New York Times* published a despatch by its man on the spot, observing that British last-minute measures such as mobilising the Navy, digging trenches in the parks, and distributing gas-masks, seemed to have been intended more as a means of scaring the British electorate than as preparations for collective resistance to German aggression.

Another well-informed observer of events, Mr. (now Lord) Keynes, who as recently as 1936 had been in favour of trusting the National Government for the sake of peace, wrote in the *New Statesman and Nation* of October 8th that—

"The public . . . may misapprehend the motives and purposes lying behind the drama of the last weeks. It imagines

that peace has been snatched from the cauldron of war by the skill, courage and tenacity of a single man. It may well be that peace was in danger at the last moment through the Prime Minister's reckless pursuit of his own aims, and his delay in taking the steps necessary to make clear the ultimate position of this country. But even this is unlikely; and the pacific impulses of the nation have been exploited to serve undisclosed aims, which, if they had been disclosed, would have been approved by some but repudiated by many. It can scarcely be questioned that at several stages in the negotiations an honourable settlement could have been secured without any risk to peace, if an unambiguous stand had been taken by this country, France and Russia speaking with one voice. Such a stand has been consistently refused. The Prime Minister was never preparing for the actuality of war. The total omission of any reference even to the possibility of military action by this country in the correspondence published in the White Paper, the avoidance of conversations with Russia, the reluctance and extraordinary delay in ordering the mobilisation of the Fleet, are not consistent with any other explanation. Neither the Prime Minister nor Herr Hitler ever intended for one moment that the play-acting should devolve into reality. For it would be a mistake to attribute extreme carelessness to the one or insanity to the other of these two astute politicians. The actual course of events has been dictated by the fact that the objectives of Herr Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain were not different, but the same."

The parallel with what happened in the case of Abyssinia is close: then too the Government went through the hocus-pocus of sham sanctions and mobilised the Navy in the Mediterranean, without the slightest intention of taking any measure that might lead to war, or of risking the loss, as Sir John Simon put it, of even a single ship in a successful naval engagement for the sake of Abyssinia. They did so solely in order to impress public opinion and cover their real policy of a raw deal with Mussolini.

Slandering the Soviet Union

The reference above to the U.S.S.R. is interesting: one trick attempted by Government apologists at the time was to assert that the Soviet Union would not go to the help of Czechoslovakia, and that this made it impossible effectively to assist that country. Most of these insinuations were made in private. But one member of the Government, Earl Winterton, then Chancellor of the Duchy

of Lancaster, on October 10th, 1938, was imprudent enough to state publicly that the U.S.S.R. did not offer help in the Czechoslovak crisis, but had "only made vague promises owing to her military weakness."

Ambassador Maisky promptly protested to Lord Halifax, and Lord Winterton had to apologise. In point of fact, Mr. Litvinov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, had stated publicly at the League Assembly in September:

"When, a few days before I left for Geneva, the French Government for the first time enquired as to our attitude in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia, I gave in the name of my Government the following perfectly clear and unambiguous reply:

"We intend to fulfil our obligations under the pact, and, together with France, to afford assistance to Czechoslovakia by the ways open to us. Our War Department is ready immediately to participate in a conference with representatives of the French and Czechoslovak War Departments, in order to discuss the measures appropriate to the moment. Independently of this, we should consider it desirable that the question be raised at the League of Nations if only as yet under Article XI, with the object, first of mobilising public opinion, and secondly, of ascertaining the position of certain other States, whose passive aid might be extremely valuable. It was necessary, however, to exhaust all means of averting an armed conflict, and we considered one such method to be an immediate consultation between the Great Powers of Europe and other interested States in order if possible to decide on the terms of a collective *démarche*."

"This is how our reply was framed. It was only two days ago that the Czechoslovak Government addressed a formal enquiry to my Government as to whether the Soviet Union is prepared, in accordance with the Soviet-Czech Pact, to render Czechoslovakia immediate and effective aid if France, loyal to her obligations, will render similar assistance, to which my Government gave a clear answer in the affirmative."

On September 23rd Litvinov and Maisky had a conversation with the junior British delegates, Earl De la Warr and Mr. R. A. Butler, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that were all the Government had seen fit to send to Geneva at this crisis in international affairs. Litvinov urged an immediate meeting of the Great Powers loyal to the Covenant, to decide on ways and means of fulfilling their obligation under Article X

of the Covenant to respect and to preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of Czechoslovakia. Asked by the British if he would agree to the meeting being held in London, he said, "Yes." Earl De la Warr immediately cabled the Government, reporting the conversation and asking for instructions. He never received a reply.

The Soviet Government next informed the Czechoslovak Government that, if Czechoslovakia fought, the U.S.S.R. would come to her assistance even if the French failed to act on their treaty of alliance and so left the U.S.S.R. free under the terms of their own treaty with Czechoslovakia. This offer was turned down by the Czechoslovak Government under the pressure of the Right Wing Agrarians, who preferred capitulation to Hitler to fighting with only the help of "Red Russia." These were the very elements that afterwards became collaborators and traitors in Czechoslovakia.

H.E. on the Munichers' Last Refuge

One point remains to be considered: the contention of the apologists for Munich that Mr. Chamberlain gained valuable time to rearm. As admittedly Hitler's Germany was throughout this period, including the year 1938-9 that Mr. Chamberlain "saved" at Munich, rearming several times as fast as the Chamberlain Government were rearming this country, it is plainly an arithmetical absurdity to contend that this country was relatively stronger after a further year of Chamberlain *versus* Hitler rearmament. The opposite was obviously the case.

But there is much more to it than that. Czechoslovakia had one of the finest and best equipped armies in Europe, numbering 2,000,000, and a first-class war industry centring on the great Skoda Works. This war industry now changed sides and worked for instead of against Hitler. It was Czech tanks from the Skoda Works that broke through the French Army at Sedan in the great drive of the Panzer divisions that ended with the capitulation of France.

The whole Czechoslovak Army was wiped out as an asset on the Allied side; all its arms and equipment were transferred to Hitler and nearly a quarter of its man-power (that derived from the 3,000,000 Sudeten Germans). In addition to having nearly 500,000 Sudeten Germans available for his Army, the wiping out of Czechoslovakia released for service elsewhere thirty of Hitler's divisions that were previously held on the Czech frontier.

When Hitler took over Czechoslovakia he captured over

1,500 planes, which meant a first-line force of at least 500 machines. That was more planes than the Chamberlain Government had managed to build for the R.A.F. in most of 1935, all 1936 and some of 1937. Hitler also acquired 469 Czech tanks, which was a far larger number than all that the Chamberlain Government after years of rearmament and vast expenditure had succeeded in providing for Lord Gort's Army when it went to France.

Add 500 A.A. guns, over 43,000 machine-guns, more than a million rifles and vast stores and supplies of all kinds, and the reader may have some idea of what Munich meant in terms of increasing Hitler's lead over this country in armaments and in man-power and economic power.

But there is still more to it than that. As Mr. Churchill bluntly stated in the House, Munich was a total unmitigated defeat and a disaster of the first magnitude for Great Britain and France.

"We must expect that all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will make the best terms they can with the triumphant Nazi Power. The series of alliances in Central Europe upon which France relied for safety has been swept away. I see no reason to think this can be reconstituted.

"The road down the Danube, with all its coal and iron, the road to the Black Sea and Turkey, has been opened. It seems to me that all the countries of *Mittel Europa* and the Danube Valley, one after the other, will be drawn into the vast system of Nazi politics radiating from Berlin."

That, of course, is precisely what did happen as a direct result of Munich. Moreover, Mr. Chamberlain foresaw it would happen, and welcomed the prospect. On November 1st, 1938, he told the House that—

"Geographically Germany must occupy the predominating position in relation to the States of central and south-eastern Europe. I do not see any reason why we should expect a fundamental change to take place in these regions. Far from this country being concerned, we have no wish to crowd Germany out of these countries or to encircle her economically."

Last, but not least, Munich weakened France internally to an extent that prepared the triumph of the Vichy traitors, and lost us the U.S.S.R., with its vast power and resources and unlimited determination, as an ally for *preventing* this war.

Deathbed Repentance at Pistol Point

Even after Munich, Mr. Chamberlain continued to pursue the policy of encouraging Hitler to expand eastwards. When Hitler marched into Prague and took possession of the whole country on March 15th, 1939, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir John Simon made speeches deploring any attempt to condemn Hitler, or to suggest that there was any case for changing British policy, and proclaiming their desire to continue their policy of appeasement. On March 16th the Federation of British Industries concluded an agreement with the *Reichsgruppe Industrie* of Germany to "replace destructive competition by constructive co-operation." In July Mr. R. M. Hudson spoke of a £1,000,000,000 loan to Hitler in return for that worthy's friendship and co-operation in disarmament! As late as the final Polish crisis Sir Neville Henderson in Berlin was still talking to Hitler about an Anglo-German alliance if only the crisis could be tided over.

But in fact appeasement, although it died hard, and lived long enough to precipitate us into the Second World War half armed and with only France as our ally, against an Axis united, heavily armed and rendered strong and self-confident by the uninterrupted successes and abundant sinews of war provided them by the appeasers, had been killed by the murder of Czechoslovakia. There was such an outburst of indignation in all parties that on March 17th Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Birmingham, abandoned the all-in appeaser doctrine and proclaimed himself a convert to the balance-of-power school which so many of his followers had already joined:

"Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by others? Is this in fact a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?"

Mr. Chamberlain then proclaimed that we were not disinterested in what went on in south-eastern Europe, would naturally turn first to our partners in the British Commonwealth and France, but believed that others too might wish to enter into consultations on this subject.

A few days previously, on March 13th, M. Coulondre, the French Ambassador in Berlin, in a despatch to his Government, had drawn attention to the growing danger lest Hitler should attempt to free his hands for a grand onslaught on the Soviet Union, which still remained his ultimate aim, by first crushing France in the west and so reducing Britain to impotence on the Continent. At about the same time the Polish Ambassador in London reported to his Government that—

"The British appeasers had reckoned with the expectation that Germany would find it difficult to absorb territories ceded to it, and, thanks to these difficulties and thanks to the opposition of Russia, would lose the capacity to expand and its forcefulness. It was foreseen that war between Russia and Germany would ensue, which would weaken both, not without affording indirect advantage to the Western Powers. The rapid succession of events by which Germany acquired valuable, bloodless booty showed the weakness of these arguments. It indicated the fact that in the last analysis this was an excuse for permitting the responsible statesmen of the Western Powers to withdraw along the line of least resistance. Serious misgivings arose when Germany, instead of losing force as a result of its action in the east, attained additional strength. From this conviction resulted an entirely new tone towards Germany."

Repentance only in Spots

There was in fact an element almost of panic in the treaties hastily concluded with the semi-Fascist dictatorships of Poland, Rumania and Greece. But even then the appeasers did not give up the hope of being able to stand up to Hitler while steering clear of the Soviet Union.

The common-sense course would have been to approach the U.S.S.R. first, since without an alliance with that country British guarantees to Poland and Rumania could not possibly save them from being overrun by Hitler. Instead, the British Government began by informing the Soviet Union that they feared the possibility of aggression against Rumania, and enquired about the possible position of the Soviet Government in such an eventuality.

The Soviet Government replied pointing out that Poland and Rumania had not asked the Soviet Government for any help nor informed that Government of any danger threatening them. In the circumstances the right course would appear to be to hold a conference of the States most closely interested—namely, Great Britain, France, Poland, Rumania, Turkey and the Soviet Union. This conference could elucidate the real situation and devise joint measures for dealing with whatever dangers existed. The British Government rejected this proposal as "premature."

The Soviet Government, never of an excessively trustful disposition and intensely suspicious of Mr. Chamberlain's intentions since the unprecedented rebuff and humiliation it had suffered over Czechoslovakia, drew the conclusion that the National

Government were either seeking to manœuvre the Soviet Union into bearing alone the main brunt of a Nazi attack on Rumania or to create a situation in which they might sell Rumania to Hitler while putting the responsibility on the Soviet Union's refusal to stand by that country.

This was not a good start for the Anglo-Soviet negotiations for an alliance. At an early stage the U.S.S.R. made it perfectly clear that she could not fight Germany unless her troops were allowed the right of passage through Poland and Rumania and unless the Baltic States, then under virtually Fascist governments and clinging to neutrality, were included in the system of mutual guarantees. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, who had made no bones about forcing the democratic republic of Czechoslovakia to commit suicide for the sake of appeasing Hitler, now took a high moral tone and declared they could not associate themselves with putting any pressure on the semi-Fascist Polish and Rumanian Governments and the almost wholly Fascist régimes of the Baltic States. All the pressure needed was to make a British guarantee to Poland contingent upon the Poles entering into an alliance with the U.S.S.R. as well as with this country, and to tell the Baltic States that if they repudiated any and every obligation to other countries and adopted the purely self-regarding policy of neutrality we considered the Soviet Union free also to consult its national interests exclusively in its relations with them.

The only result of the British attitude was to deepen Soviet suspicion. Then came the Soviet demand for Lord Halifax as the responsible head of our foreign policy to be the British negotiator; instead, a Foreign Office official, Mr. (now Sir) William Strang, was sent to Moscow. Finally, a British military mission arrived, which also proved to have no powers to discuss, let alone take decisions on, the issues the Russians considered vital, if an alliance were to be concluded.

The Final Failure

The policy of attempting to conclude an alliance with the Western democracies against Fascist aggression, on which the Soviet Union had embarked in 1934 and for the sake of which it entered the League in 1935, expired. The Soviet Government had tried it out with a patience and persistence in the face of rebuffs and intrigues that were worthy of admiration. But they had for some time been maturing an alternative policy, based on ruthless national egotism and consisting essentially in making Chamberlain's "West-European" policy "back-fire." "The

British Tories have persistently sabotaged all our attempts to conclude an alliance with them against Hitler, hoping instead to turn him against us," said Stalin, in effect. "Very well, we will reverse that policy by rearming to the teeth, concluding a non-aggression and friendship treaty with Hitler, and letting him rip against the Western Powers."

That was the reasoning that underlay the Soviet-German Pact. There was also scepticism as to whether Britain and France would ever fight and, if they did, whether it would not be a mere "phoney" war, to be called off at the first opportunity, and to be converted into some form of Anglo-German co-operation against the U.S.S.R., if the latter were to let herself be drawn in.

There is small doubt in the light of subsequent events that the Soviet-German Treaty did in fact make Hitler feel he could safely risk a world war, and so precipitated the final crisis and its fatal conclusion. Nor that if the U.S.S.R. had trusted progressive opinion and particularly the workers in the Western democracies to see that they were not let down if they got into the war on our side, or even if they had given due weight to the split in the Conservative camp between the balance-of-power and the all-in appeasers and realised how rapidly the Conservative Party would join the former, and Chamberlainites turn into Vansittartites, in case of war, they might with mutual advantage have concluded an Anglo-Soviet alliance that left gaps and ambiguities on paper. Even then, perhaps, the war might have been prevented, and if not it would certainly have been won in the first two or three years.

But the mistakes and lack of faith of the Soviet Union fade into insignificance beside the enormity of the crimes and blunders of the National Government's foreign policy and the immensity of their final failure. This war could have been prevented over and over again by an honest and courageous British foreign policy, the kind of policy public opinion wanted and Labour always demanded. The policy actually pursued by the Tories, for class-war reasons, in cynical disregard of treaty obligations, election pledges, morality and justice, not only helped to bring this war about, but is responsible for our entering it almost without allies and in a half-armed condition. It was the staunchness of the British people, of all parties and classes, Labour's entry into the coalition, Hitler's attack on the U.S.S.R., and Japan's attack on the U.S.A., that saved us from defeat.

WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

THE TORY LINE TO-DAY is to claim that they have established national unity in foreign policy, on the basis of the proceedings of the San Francisco Conference. It is doubtful whether Labour and progressive opinion can be satisfied with what is accomplished at San Francisco. They will probably feel obliged to press for amendments and additions.

But there will not be national unity in foreign policy even if and when all parties accept the Charter as the basis of their foreign policy, and the Council, Assembly, etc., as the institutions through which to apply their policy. There was no unity in foreign policy after the last war, although all parties were pledged to the Covenant. There is no unity in home policy, although all parties are pledged to the constitution and to Parliament.

The Tories have, it is true, accepted Government responsibility for full employment, social security, a national health service, housing, better education, children's allowances, industrial insurance, etc. But they promised all these things and more at the end of the last war. Nothing came of it, because they made the preservation of capitalism their first concern. What their promise really meant was: "You shall have these things, provided we can get them for you on the basis of capitalism. But first we must restore free enterprise by scrapping wartime controls."

They did. We all know what happened. The point is they are doing exactly the same to-day. History is repeating itself. Since the last war big business is bigger and better organised than ever. The reconstruction plans of Lever Bros., the 120 industrialists, and the F.B.I. mean government by big business, for big business, and of big business, with the consumers and workers taking what they are given and Parliament having as much to say as Hitler's Reichstag. Robert Foot's coalowners' monopoly, with the coalowners calling themselves national trustees, and the giant monopoly being formed by the steel industry are further examples of this semi-Fascist trend. The growth and power of cartels, trade associations, trusts and monopolies have become a problem arousing widespread concern. The Tory Party are the instrument of these dark forces—they represent big business in politics. Their cry to abolish Government controls of economic life in order to restore freedom

of enterprise merely voices the claim of big business to impose its own control on the country.

In international affairs the abolition of controls means making such a mess of reconstruction that we shall not get steady full employment here, but a short boom followed by a long slump. It will also mean prices soaring and the pound becoming worth so little that war savings will lose value and the children's allowances and other social benefits that the National Government have refused to adjust on a sliding scale to the cost of living will become mere chicken feed.

In the political field, too, the Tories, by making preservation of the present social order their first care, will go on backing reactionaries everywhere, as they have already done in Greece and Italy, and tried to do in France, Belgium and Yugoslavia. Germany has been so smashed up and her big business men and landowners are so poisoned with militarism and racial arrogance that she can only be reconstructed, made safe for peace, and contribute reparations in kind, through a government based on the working class and going a long way to Socialism. The same is true in varying degree of most of the liberated countries. The Tories will consider it a vital national interest to oppose such developments, even if it means fighting the resistance movements and backing ex-Fascists, collaborators, and reactionaries. They have started to behave like that already, in Greece and elsewhere.

Soviet national interests are on the side of the resistance movements and of reconstruction on a largely Socialist basis in Europe.

On the Continent, in the eastern Mediterranean, in the Middle and Far East there are already signs of a clash between British social and imperial interests, as understood by the Tories, and Soviet policies.

The Tories lost the peace last time because they put the defence of capitalism before everything else. To-day the need for fundamental social change is more tragically urgent than ever. The Tories are still the last-ditch defenders of capitalism. Therefore they will lose the peace again, just as they did last time.

Labour's policies and instincts in international affairs have been proved right by the test of twenty-five years' experience. Labour's foreign policy to-day is sound, and Labour stands for reconstruction on the basis of Socialism. Labour is trusted abroad, by the masses and the resistance movements and all who believe in international co-operation and justice. A Labour government could and would win the peace.

